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**REGISTER TODAY SPORT PAGE 20
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Football WIN A TRIP TO THE 1998
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**EDINBURGH FESTIVAL:
TICKETS, TICKETS AND MORE TICKETS**
the eye



Hands-on: Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott fingering the Labour Party pledge card at yesterday's press conference. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Mandelson spat takes the shine off Labour's party

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Labour celebrations on the eve of its first 100 days in power were overshadowed by questions about Peter Mandelson running the government while Tony Blair is on holiday in Tuscany.

Mr Mandelson, the minister without portfolio, came out fighting when he was questioned about his role on the *World at One* on BBC radio 4, which led to "dozens of listeners" telephoning the BBC to complain about his "overbearing, arrogant, pompous" performance. "We always get a steady stream of callers, but there was a marked number

about his interview," said a BBC source.

Mr Mandelson earlier attacked "vain-glorious self-indulgent questions" about the prominent role he has played since Mr Blair left to spend his summer holidays in the villa near Siena owned by Geoffrey Robinson, the millionaire Paymaster General.

Although he is not a member of the Cabinet, Mr Mandelson has been in charge of handling the Government's public relations since the news broke last weekend about Robin Cook's affair with his secretary. Mr Mandelson spoke for the Government on the future of the Royal Yacht, the Milford inquiry into

Chris Patten, and chaired a press conference for Lord Simon, the trade minister, to announce he was selling his £2.3m BP shares.

When it was suggested on BBC radio that he was becoming the "face of the Government", Mr Mandelson retorted: "There you go again," he said. "You can't get off the subject."

Questions about Mr Mandelson's role are also causing friction between the Government and the Liberal Democrats since Mr Blair gave Paddy Ashdown and key lieutenants seats on a special Cabinet committee.

Mr Mandelson, an architect of the links, warned the Liberal Democrats at the press conference they should decide

whether they were going to exercise "a little responsibility" after being brought into the Government by Mr Blair. "I think the jury is out about what they are going to do."

That was seen as a threat to the Liberal Democrats to toe the Government line. Government sources said Mr Mandelson was aware of split in the Liberal Democrats about whether it was a good or bad thing to join the Government on the committee, and he was developing that debate.

But Liberal Democrat sources said it was retaliation against Norman Baker, a Liberal Democrat MP who has raised a series of Commons questions

about Mr Mandelson's role in the Government. Mr Mandelson was said to be "deeply irritated" last weekend when Mr Baker's questions led to reports that Mr Mandelson had not spoken in the Commons for a year.

"He is their political warfare minister and he is getting his retaliation in."

This goes back to Parliament and the hundreds of questions that Norman Baker put down, getting him to spell out that he hasn't spoken in the House since mid-1996. He was very deeply irritated about that," a Liberal Democrat source said.

Labour's first 100 days, page 12
Leading article, page 13
Commentary, page 15

Michael Streeter

A row broke out over the failed multi-million pound prosecution of alleged match-fixing in football after former Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar was yesterday cleared of accepting a £2,000 bribe. The verdict, directed by Mr Justice McCullough after a Winchester jury failed to agree, ended claims of widespread betting corruption that have hung over English football for three years.

As Mr Grobbelaar, currently without a team, described his ordeal as "hell", an MP asked whether it had been right to proceed with an investigation that has led to two long trials and, according to some estimates, costs of up to £20m. Labour MP Tam Dalyell, who is tabling Commons questions to discover how much public money was spent, said: "The whole thing has been quite preposterous and especially the decision to hold a second trial after the first one ended without agreement by the jury. As someone ... who saw the TV and video clips of Grobbelaar ... I cannot imagine how it could be suggested that he threw the games."

There was also anger that the judge refused costs to defendants John Fashanu, a former Wimbleton player, and ex-teammate Hans Segers, both cleared with Mr Grobbelaar and businessman Heng Suan Lim on Thursday of conspiracy to throw matches.

Mr Justice McCullough said: "It seems clear Mr Fashanu's own conduct brought suspicion on himself and led the prosecution into thinking the case



Grobbelaar celebrating with his wife yesterday John Voos

against him was stronger than it was." It is also understood the Inland Revenue may investigate unpaid tax in football after the court heard that players had been accepting money legally to forecast matches for an Indonesian gambling syndicate.

The Football Association has already announced an inquiry into match-fixing and betting and confirmed last night that it would examine whether Mr Grobbelaar had breached current regulations.

Mr Fashanu, who sold his penthouse to fund his case, said he will appeal against the costs ruling, which could leave him with a personal bill of around £650,000. Mr Segers, who like Mr Grobbelaar received legal aid part-way through the case as funds ran out, will lose £65,000, and his co-defendant at least £30,000. A defence source said later: "Financially this can be described as a Pyrrhic victory."

The theme was taken up by Mr Grobbelaar after the jury, which deliberated for 30 hours in total, said it was unable to reach a verdict on the final charge. At the inconclusive first trial the jury deliberated for 11 hours after a 34-day hearing. The goalkeeper denied accepting £2,000 from his former business partner, Christopher Vincent, to throw matches, in a sting set up by *The Sun*.

Mr Grobbelaar told a press conference: "The verdicts of today and yesterday are a victory for football. Right from the beginning there has never been a game thrown, either in the future or in the past ... it has been sheer hell for my family. As a man who has seen a lot in life, for me to go through this has been sheer hell."

He refused to comment on his legal bill or whether he might continue a libel action against *The Sun*, which in November 1994 broke the story of the alleged football scandal of the century. The paper indicated that it would fight any action.

Later the Crown Prosecution Service, which confirmed it would not be seeking a second re-trial, defended its handling of the case. "The seriousness of the offences left no doubt that the public interest required a prosecution."

Hampshire police also defended their investigation. Assistant chief constable Peter Linden Jones said they had to investigate "very serious" allegations in *The Sun*, though the public could now be reassured by the verdict that there was nothing "untoward" in football.

Costly case, page 3

100 days... and the going gets harder

From Our Wrong Correspondent...

Richard Edmondson, Racing Correspondent, in the first of a series in which specialist reporters venture outside their normal field, watched Labour's 100 days press conference.

Andrew Slaughter, the beaten Uxbridge candidate, have been sent to Coventry. Labour's march to a century seemed to be going well until, like a nervous batsman, they got the jitters in the 90s.

Robin's absence was a personal blow. My racing colleague does the selections for the *Glasgow Herald*, and there has been much discussion of the constituency of his tipping this week.

Exactly 190 years ago, a horse called "Election" won the Derby.

by, and there have been interesting Blue Riband winners since. Tony Blair will know that "Quest For Fame" was successful in 1990, while Peter Mandelson's favourite is doubtless "Dr Devious" two years later.

There was promise of a further racing connection yesterday with the appearance of the former steward, John Prescott. He, though, was not affiliated to the Jockey Club, rather to the Cumbard line.

The Deputy Prime Minister's arrival was prefaced by sombre classical music – the party has gone from D-Ream to D'Reary – and a film montage of public supporters, including that great volatile political animal, the London cabby.

After this Pearl and Dean episode came the Torvill and Dean partnership of the tall chap (Mandelson) and his dumpy confederate (Prescott).

On a stage as clean and flimsy as an Ikea showroom, John was straight into his press release, faltering only when he inexplicably put the recent showers down to his "Riverdance". Mandelson didn't falter, nor would he if you lit matches under his feet. No wonder England are struggling when their best spinner is ignored.

In spite of the trident hidden in his lapel pocket and the long, pointed tail tucked into his trousers, Mandelson's charcoal suit seemed to be hanging rather well. The minister without portfolio dislikes the media's attempt to demonise him as the arch manipulator, yet somehow he had attracted more than 10 camera crews to observe the simple act of him reading a great trumpeting of the party.

Questions were taken and questioners were humiliated, and by the end, the Fourth Estate was so concussed there was not even mention of the previous day's fourth interest rate rise since Labour took office.

Our speakers left in a red ministerial Jaguar with Prescott on the passenger side and Mandelson in the back. Who knows which of them has been in the driving seat while Tony Blair was away.

QUICKLY

Pound plunges

The pound plunged on the foreign exchange markets after the Bank of England's hint that no more interest-rate rises were necessary. Page 18

UCAS LISTINGS

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QUICKLY

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CONTENTS

THE BROADSHEET	
Business & City	18-19
Comment	13-15
Foreign news	9-11
Home news	2-8, 12
Leading articles	13
Letters	13
Obituaries	16
Saturday Story	14
Shares	17
Sport	21-23
THE LONG WEEKEND	
Arts, reviews	4-5
Books	6-8
Gardening	17
Motoring	21
Property	22
TV & Radio	28
Travel	9-15
Weather	27

THE LONG WEEKEND

Arts, reviews	4-5
Books	6-8
Gardening	17
Motoring	21
Property	22
TV & Radio	28
Travel	9-15
Weather	27

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A mother's 395-day wait for Godot

Imre Karacs
Bonn

Somewhere in Hanover there is a very happy little boy. For 395 days of his short life he lacked a name but now, thanks to his mother's persistence, the long wait is over. A toast to Max Geronimo Godot.

"Godot?", asked the town registrar all those 395 days ago. Flicking nervously through his list of approved German names, the civil servant smiled as he

said: "Max", his brows furrowed as he searched among the Gs for Geronimo, and began to twitch nervously when the baby's mother started to spell out G-O-D-O-T.

The registrar was well-read. He had heard about Geronimo, though he was pretty sure it was not a German name. Worse, he had seen the name "Godot" written down somewhere. "I've got it," he exclaimed. "Godot is in no way a forename. It's a fantasy name from literature. You

can't have it." To prove he was not a heartless pen-pusher he nodded "Geronimo" through. Normally, the laws of German nomenclature are strict to the point of defining how many words a name can consist of, and even what a married woman is allowed to call herself. The system is designed to keep silly names like Elvis out of the telephone book. The registrar also wanted to prevent the child being subjected to ridicule, he



news

significant shorts

Bomb drops into woman's lap in Belfast café

An incendiary bomb dropped onto a woman's lap as she took her seat in a south Belfast coffee shop yesterday. The small device, wrapped in tissue paper, was hidden underneath a table at the shop in the Finnagh district. It dropped to the floor when the customer got to her seat. Staff alerted the police, who evacuated the immediate area before Army explosives experts were called in. Police later confirmed the device was an incendiary.

Sean Corrigan, a Catholic, who owns My Granny's Pantry coffee shop, said he was stunned by the attack. "The woman was very calm until she realised it was a bomb. She couldn't believe it," he said. "I've no idea why the shop was targeted."

Lake rescue attempt on girl, 7

The body of a seven-year-old girl was dragged from a lake yesterday after a car plunged into the water at Womersley, near Selby, North Yorkshire. The girl had been under the water for at least 20 minutes and attempts were being made by doctors to revive her, police said. Police said it was not known how many people were in the car and divers were searching the lake.

Green-belt factory gets go-ahead

Ministers have overruled one of their own planning inspectors to allow a micro-electronics plant to be built on green-belt land outside Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham. Green-belt land is meant to be protected from construction to stop cities sprawling, but planning minister Richard Caborn said there were "very special circumstances" - the urgent need to diversify the West Midlands' economy and the lack of an alternative site for the plant. The planning application for the 140-acre site at Minworth was made by the Government's West Midlands Development Agency, but it is thought that Dutch multinational Philips is interested in occupying the factory.

Nicholas Schoon

Alien sex fiend is new Modesty Blaise

The role of comic strip heroine Modesty Blaise, reportedly turned down by Uma Thurman because it involved nudity, has gone to the virtually unknown actress Natasha Henstridge (left). Ms Henstridge is best known for playing an alien sex fiend in the science fiction film *Species*.

Modesty Blaise, the sexy adventuress from the novels by Peter O'Donnell and the long-running syndicated comic strip that appears in the London *Villain* and co-starred Terence Stamp. The new version will be directed by Frenchman Luc Besson, responsible for this year's box office blockbuster *The Fifth Element*.

David Lister

Children's home worker suspended

A care worker has been suspended as part of an inquiry into allegations of physical and sexual abuse at children's homes dating back more than 30 years. It emerged yesterday, Kirklees Social Services in West Yorkshire has received four complaints, some referring to the Sixties, from people who say they were mistreated while in care in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire police are working with social services and the NSPCC on the inquiry.

Neo-Nazi concert in South Wales

Police are to mount a major operation today to prevent any trouble from a planned neo-Nazi rock concert. But senior officers yesterday were still trying to locate the South Wales venue of the so-called "Aryan Fest" advertised in leaflets circulating among ultra-right extremist groups in Europe. Special protection is being given to the Asian festival at Cardiff International Arena to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence for India and Pakistan.

Windsor castle oil well abandoned

A Canadian oil exploration company has abandoned its plans to drill an exploration borehole beneath the Queen's Windsor Castle after its government licence to do so expired.

Birmingham lands Eurovision

Birmingham's National Indoor Arena was announced as the venue for next May's Eurovision song contest, beating venues in London, Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow to stage the event.

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people



Ken Rutherford talks to the Princess on her arrival in Sarajevo yesterday (Photograph: Reuters)

Victim's praise for Diana's message on landmines

Diana, Princess of Wales, arrived in Bosnia yesterday, and earned the praise of a landmine victim, who said people around the world would not be distracted from her visit's message by world headlines about her new "romance".

The princess flew into Sarajevo for the start of a three-day visit to develop a campaign against landmines by meeting maimed victims, who regard themselves as "forgotten". She smiled and was clearly relaxed as she alighted from the unmarked white jet in which she flew from London.

She was welcomed by a small group of officials and charity workers before boarding a car carrying the markings of Norwegian People's Aid. Ken Rutherford, co-founder of the Landmine Survivors' Network, which arranged the trip, was on the tarmac to welcome her. He had lost both his legs in a landmine explosion in Somalia.

"I have lost both my legs and I have testified to the US Senate and spoken to a lot of politicians" said Mr Rutherford. "I have met the Princess and she is a real person. She cares about this issue in her heart."

"You don't come to Bosnia for a vacation. I think most people around the world will see her just as I do. She really cares."

American-born Mr Rutherford was an aid worker in Somalia in 1993 when he lost his right leg, and part of his left needed amputating.

He founded Landmine Survivors' Network in September 1995 with Jerry White, also 33, who lost his

foot when a landmine exploded on a hiking holiday in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights in 1984.

Mr Rutherford said he met the Princess when she had addressed a meeting in London about landmines earlier this year.

"It's incredible that she has come to Bosnia. She is the most renowned face in the world and for her to support what we are doing is incredible."

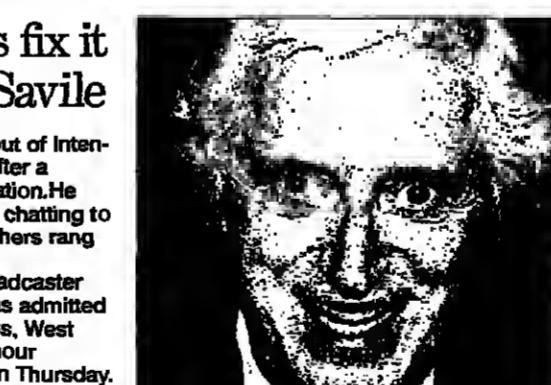
He believed she had been particularly attracted to the fact that the network was particularly concerned about landmine survivors long after they were injured.

The security surrounding the visit was so tight that some of the families the Princess was to meet were unaware that she was coming, he said. Others had been told only in the last few days. Security considerations meant there were few further details of the Princess's itinerary, but she was due to meet groups of mainly military victims of landmines during an evening at an hotel in Tuzla last night.

International discussion about the need to ban landmines had tended to ignore the problems faced by the victims, said Mr Rutherford. "These people become forgotten, shut off in their own homes."

Diana had just returned from a Mediterranean holiday with the millionaire playboy Dodi Fayed, 41, son and heir of Harrods owner, Mohamed al-Fayed.

According to reports, the Princess was seen arriving at his apartment on Thursday night, apparently to have dinner with him, only hours before her departure for Bosnia.



Heart surgeons fix it for Sir Jimmy Savile

Sir Jimmy Savile was moved out of intensive care yesterday morning, after a quadruple heart bypass operation. He was said to be in good spirits, chatting to doctors and nurses as well-wishers rang the hospital switchboard.

The 71-year-old veteran broadcaster and charity fundraiser, who was admitted to Killingbeck Hospital in Leeds, West Yorkshire, underwent a three-hour quadruple bypass operation on Thursday.

His secretary, Janet Cope, said: "He's talking to the surgeons and nurses, smiling and responding well to the operation."

Sir Jimmy learned he needed the heart operation four years ago but continually put it off, Mrs Cope said. "He kept going to check-ups and putting it off until a few weeks ago, when his sister Christine, who was 76, died from a heart attack."

"I think that made him realise it was time for him to go in for the operation."

Sir Jimmy was expected to remain in hospital for two weeks and must then take it easy for three or four months.

Lecturer sacked for saying child sex 'harmless'

Chris Brand, the Edinburgh University lecturer who claimed child sex was harmless in certain circumstances, was sacked yesterday after a tribunal found him guilty of gross misconduct.

The psychology don's claims on the Internet that paedophilia was acceptable, as long as the child was over 12 and of above average intelligence, were condemned as "disgraceful" by Professor Sir Stewart Sutherland, principal of the university.

Mr Brand, 52, was suspended from his teaching and administrative duties last November following complaints about his conduct. A university disciplinary tribunal,

submitted its report to the principal. The university faced down calls for Mr Brand's resignation earlier last year after he wrote a book claiming whites were more intelligent than blacks.

The more recent case was extraordinary, the tribunal found, because he had "courted further publicity and shown a desire to pursue his own goals at the expense of others." The effect of his remarks was "to undermine completely any of the remaining trust and confidence which members of the Department might have had in Mr Brand as a colleague."

Lucy Ward

briefing

BROADCASTING

Radio 1 listeners fall below 10m for the first time

Radio 1's forthcoming 30th anniversary celebrations had some of the fizz removed yesterday, when it emerged that its listenership has plunged below the 10 million mark for the first time.

The latest statistics from ratings researcher Rajar show that the BBC's pop and prattle service for young people is down to 9.67 million listeners - just over half the audience it drew when it was launched in 1967. The loss of 1.3 million listeners year-on-year is largely due to Chris Evans' abrupt departure from its breakfast show in January.

Evans' fans have been returning in recent months to Virgin Radio or vibrant local music stations such as Capital and Heart FM in London. In overall national terms, commercial radio is enjoying unprecedented popularity, now accounting for 50.2 per cent of all listening. Radio 3's audience of 2.3 million is just half that of its commercial rival, Classic FM.

The latest Rajar results would have been even bleaker for the Beeb if Radio 2 and Radio 4 hadn't boosted their popularity. Critical attention will be focused on the latter to see whether it gains or loses listeners as a result of major scheduling changes it has just announced. But the impact of the controversial reforms won't register with Rajar for some time.

Rob Brown

HEALTH

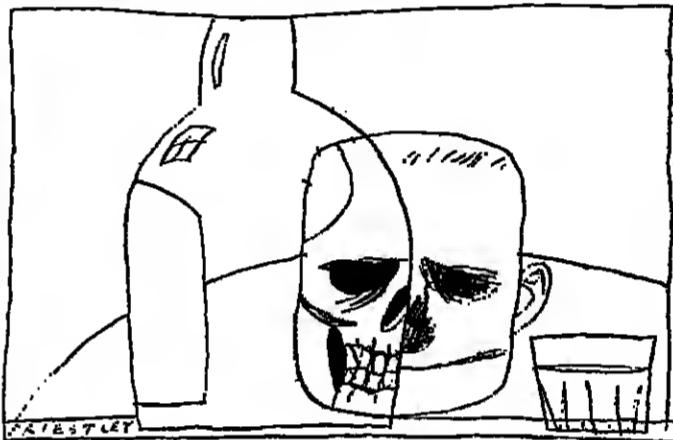
Alcoholism cuts lives short in Russia

Russians appear to be drinking themselves to death at a rate unmatched anywhere else in modern times, researchers say. The average life expectancy for Russian men fell by 6.2 years and for women by 3.4 years between 1990 and 1994, and a major reason for that was a high consumption of alcohol, according to a report in the *Lancet*.

"The available evidence suggests ... that the very high alcohol consumption, together with the habit of binge-drinking, may be resulting in a very large number of circulatory deaths in middle age," according to the report.

The team led by David Leon of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine worked with staff from the Center of Demography and Human Ecology in Moscow. The report was based on an overall analysis of statistics between 1984 and 1994.

It said average life expectancy at birth for Russian men fell from 63.8 years in 1990 to 57.6 years in 1994 and for women from 74.4 years to 71 years. "The magnitude and steepness of the fluctuations in mortality rates and life expectancy for Russia are without parallel in the modern era."



RESEARCH

Protein link to brain diseases

British and German researchers have reported significant progress in understanding how brain cells die in people suffering from Huntington's chorea, as well as two other degenerative brain diseases.

The findings of the researchers, published in the journal *Cell*, indicate that Huntington's chorea is caused by a build-up of proteins inside the cell, which eventually kills it. A similar process may be at work in two other crippling brain disorders, Alzheimer's disease and Creutzfeld-Jakob disease.

Priority will now be given to screening for drugs that inhibit the protein buildup. "We all know what we think the primary event [cause] is, so we can start working on a cure, perhaps by stopping these aggregations from forming," said Dr Gillian Bates, of Guy's Hospital in London.

Huntington's chorea is an hereditary degenerative disease that causes premature death of nerve cells in the brain, triggering mental and physical deterioration. It is characterised by involuntary movements of the body and dementia.

TELECOMS

Dialling a number you won't forget

Business telephone numbers could be easier to remember, under plans announced yesterday by telecommunications watchdog, Ofcom.

Under the proposals, companies and public organisations can choose to change their current numbers to one prefixed with "05", regardless of where they are in the country. The number will be followed by three digits which identify the company and six more to get the individual line.

The 05 scheme will be voluntary and numbers will be available for distribution from 1998. Ofcom hopes it will be up and running by 1999. The plans have been initiated in order to reduce the pressure on 01 numbers and lessen the need for future code changes.

Don Crichton, Director General of Telecommunications, at Ofcom, said: "These plans are in response to clear customer demand. The scheme is primarily intended for organisations who operate extensive multi-site networks of their own, although smaller companies will also be able to use it."

NATURE

Birds feel heat of global warming

Many British birds now lay their eggs nine days earlier each spring than they did a quarter century ago, say researchers, and they suggest man-made global warming is behind the change. The British Trust for Ornithology analysed nest-laying records for 65 native species from 1971 to last year, kept by hundreds of dedicated amateur ornithologists.

It found that for 20 of those species, the average date when the first egg was laid became significantly earlier over the 25 years, and for only one species, the stock dove, did that date become later.

For the remainder of the birds, no strong trend in egg-laying dates emerged - although there was a weak, overall tendency towards earlier clutches. Warmth earlier in the year makes plants and insects grow more rapidly, which provides more food for baby birds - thus there is a competitive advantage in earlier egg-laying. The research is published in this week's issue of the science journal *Nature*.

Nicholas Schoon

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Killer had boy in his sights

Steve Boggan

A heroin dealer whose five-year-old stepson was killed in a drug-fuelled shooting has told detectives that he believes the boy was deliberately targeted.

Before returning to his home under heavy police guard yesterday, John Bates, the stepfather of Dillon Hull, revealed that his assailant has waited until the child victim was by his side before opening fire.

Dillon was shot through the head and Mr Bates suffered a minor stomach wound in the attack last Wednesday.

Angry residents in Deane, Bolton, Greater Manchester, launched a petition yesterday to have Mr Bates, 28, and Dillon's mother, Jane Hull, 29, moved from their home in Jauncey Street as it emerged that both had appeared in court last year on heroin dealing-related charges.

Then, Mr Bates was jailed for

21 months, while Recorder Arthur Noble, sitting at Burnley Crown Court, put Ms Hull on probation with the warning: "I hope that you will bring your son up properly and make sure he doesn't have any such involvement [with drugs]."

However, his warning went unheeded. Ms Hull gave birth to another boy, Codie, three weeks ago which, according to her father, Robert Hull, was born a heroin addict.

"He was born addicted to drugs," Mr Hull told the *Manchester Evening News*. "That's why he's still in hospital. Jane is a registered heroin addict."

Bolton Social Services said there had been no care orders relating to either Dillon or Codie, but a spokesman said the family was "known" to social workers.

Detective Superintendent Peter Ellis, the man leading the murder inquiry, said Mr Bates had been able to give him a full account of the attack before dis-



Dillon Hull, pictured with his mother, Jane Hull.

charging himself from hospital and returning home in the early hours of yesterday.

Mr Ellis said the assailant had waited in a yellow Metro while Mr Bates was alone in the street looking for Dillon. Once he found the boy, the gunman launched his attack.

"Mr Bates believes that the man had every opportunity to

attack him at that time but, for reasons best known to that individual, he did not take that opportunity," said Mr Ellis.

"The man in the yellow Metro has chosen to carry out that attack ... when John Bates was with Dillon. To me, that demonstrates the callous nature of the man I am looking for," Greater Manchester Police yes-

terday offered a £10,000 reward for information leading to the killer's conviction.

The decision to allow Mr Bates to return home was taken after long consultations with police but it provoked an angry response from neighbours.

"We had to respect their wishes to return to their home and their community" said Mr Ellis.

"There is an increased uniformed presence and we have taken other measures to guarantee the safety of the bereaved family and people of Deane."

However, many residents said Mr Bates's return spelled danger for their children.

"I am absolutely furious that they should let him back here," said Bert Plimley, 58. "I feel very sorry for what has happened but there are repercussions for other people. I have 14 grandchildren, but there's no way I can let them visit while he's here."

Details of Ms Hull's court

case, published in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, showed that she only avoided a jail sentence for allowing her home to be used for drug dealing because she had Dillon.

Mr Bates told the court that she had "turned a blind eye" to his dealing so he could fund his own heroin addiction.

The court was told that Ms Hull had tried to remove Mr Bates from her home because of his drug abuse but she allowed him back because she was "fond" of him.

Judge Noble said he would spare her from jail for the sake of Dillon and so put her on probation for two years instead. He said Ms Hull appeared to have been "dominated" by Mr Bates and advised her not to allow him back into her home until he had weaned himself off heroin.

However, instead of weaning Mr Bates off heroin, it appears that she became hooked on the drug herself.

Philistines: That's what Sir Colin Davis thinks about the Cabinet



Sir Colin Davis rehearsing the National Youth Orchestra for tonight's Prom concert

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Tonight's Promenade concert at the Royal Albert Hall is unique. It will undoubtedly be the only time during the whole promenade season that the orchestra is in tears at the end of the concert.

The teenagers of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain will be releasing pent-up emotion at the climax of their year as they perform Sibelius, Vaughan Williams and Tippett.

But their conductor tonight, the illustrious Sir Colin Davis, has tears of genuine rage over the fact that Britain's premier youth orchestra is in perpetual financial instability.

In an interview with *The Independent*, Sir Colin denounced the Government as "philistines" for refusing to invest in youthful talent. It is the first time this term of cultural abuse has been aimed at the new Labour administration. Coming from one of the world's most renowned conductors it is likely to sting both the Prime Minister and his Culture Secretary Chris Smith.

The NYO, founded in 1948, has produced numerous fa-

mous musicians and conductors such as Sir Simon Rattle and Mark Elder. It costs £550,000 a year to run and receives only £25,000 from the Arts Council and £800 from the Department of Education. The Arts Council cannot give more as it does not give major revenue funding grants to amateur organisations.

Michael de Grey, chief executive of the orchestra, said: "Our future is insecure. We are dependent on private sponsorship and it only needs one sponsor to pull out and we're under threat. It's been a battle to raise sponsorship every year."

Yet being in this orchestra changes people's lives, even if they don't become musicians," he says. "It provides them with discipline, teamwork, friendship and the pursuit of excellence."

The NYO has a lottery application for £500,000 with the Arts Council, but even if they receive this sum, it could not go towards their core funding which takes 150 talented youngsters on three residential tuition courses a year, culminating in the Proms.

Sir Colin Davis is now pub-

licly advocating that what is really needed is a rethink of how public money is channelled to the arts.

At present it goes to the arts institutions which reach the biggest audiences or provide ground-breaking radical new work. But there should be a third strand for funding. Namely, highly talented, amateur outfits which bring young people into creating and performing.

Sir Colin, who has just led the

NYO for tonight's Prom, forfeiting his own fee, said: "It's disgraceful that the NYO hardly gets any public money. The government advocates improving the quality of life. But I fear the worst. I fear it's government by philistines for the rest of my life. After the War, when I was a boy, there were all kinds of intellectuals in the government — cultivated people. We need a bit more of that vision now."

"All the NYO needs is £50,000 a year. Think what it does for these kids. They are welcome everywhere they go. Mr Blair cannot talk about 'Education, education, and education' while grants for the arts concentrate on the big institutions and leave this young people's orchestra searching for money."

He added: "Without sounding pretentious, those of us who are older ought to work with the young — give them a taste of what it costs to play this kind of music, the emotional cost, the mental cost, the tech-

nical cost."

Sir Colin, former music director at the Royal Opera House, said: "We [top conductors] get paid a lot, probably too much. You've got to plough something back."

Care Duckworth, 17, from Bolton, leader of the orchestra, said: "Tonight is the peak for the NYO. It's very sad as well. We've been together for an intense time and not to know each other so well. We all tend to cry a lot at the end of the Prom, or actually in it."

Business deal that cost Grobbelaar dear

Michael Streeter

For the rest of his life Bruce Grobbelaar, the Clown Prince of football, will regret the day in July 1992 when he walked into a Chester wine bar to meet businessman Christopher Vincent.

It was their business deal and resulting friendship which was to lead to the allegations of match-fixing against Grobbelaar and spark off nearly three years of investigation culminating in two trials.

Although cleared yesterday, the case has been, financially at least, a Pyrrhic victory. He faces legal bills of tens of thousands of pounds, the case has coincided with the final stages of his soccer career — he left Plymouth Argyle at the end of last

season — and put tremendous pressure on both his personal and business life.

Grobbelaar, an ebullient personality who achieved superhero status on Merseyside in a Liverpool side full of heroes, had gone into business with fellow Zimbabwean Vincent. Knowing his playing days were numbered, he aimed to set up his future financial security. Even after court victory, that dream seems shattered.

The goalkeeper was to lose £70,000 when their safari company Mondoro collapsed in 1994, but the personal fall-out was even more spectacular. Feeling hurt, and seeking money and "revenge", Mr Vincent went to the Sun newspaper with a remarkable story that the Liverpool and Southampton

goalkeeper, one of the biggest names in English soccer, had been trying to fix the result of Premier League games for a Far East gambling syndicate.

The newspaper used Mr Vincent to set up a "sting", in a series of interviews with his old friend in October 1994 which were secretly videotaped. It was these tapes which formed the charge that Grobbelaar took £2,000 from Mr Vincent as a bribe to influence football games for another — invented — syndicate, and on which he was formally cleared yesterday.

The footballer claimed later that he had been stringing Mr Vincent along, suspecting that his former friend may be trying to set him up.

The re-trial jury also spotted that a crucial line from the video tape had been missed by both prosecution and defence and did not appear in the transcript; that when Grobbelaar picked up the £2,000 offered by the non-existent syndicate, it was only after Mr Vincent, referring to the cash, said to him, "I don't have a jacket, you carry this."

The jury was unable to reach a verdict on the charge against Grobbelaar and the judge entered a verdict of not guilty.

Mr Vincent, the key prosecution witness, was attacked by the defence.

Rodney Klevan QC, Grobbelaar's counsel, said the player had given Mr Vincent his time, his money and his friendship. "In return he has received treachery and, more importantly, he has received lies," he said.

The defence highlighted Grobbelaar's reputation, from boy soldier with the Rhodesian army to the man who comforted the families of victims after the Hillsborough tragedy.

His remarkable, and sometimes lighthearted approach to football, came from his experience on national service. "Losing a game is not a tragedy after experiencing border raids and having to eat beetles because you are out of rations."

A string of impressive expert witnesses, including 1966 World Cup heroes Gordon Banks, former Arsenal goalkeeper and television pundit, Bob Wilson, and the goalkeeper's manager at Southampton, Alan Bell, all testified to Grobbelaar's performances.

Grobbelaar yesterday movingly thanked the fans who had stood by him.

Their attitude was summed up by a front page headline in a Liverpool newspaper when the allegations were first made. It ran: "We stand by our man".

IN TOMORROW'S FIVE-SECTION INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

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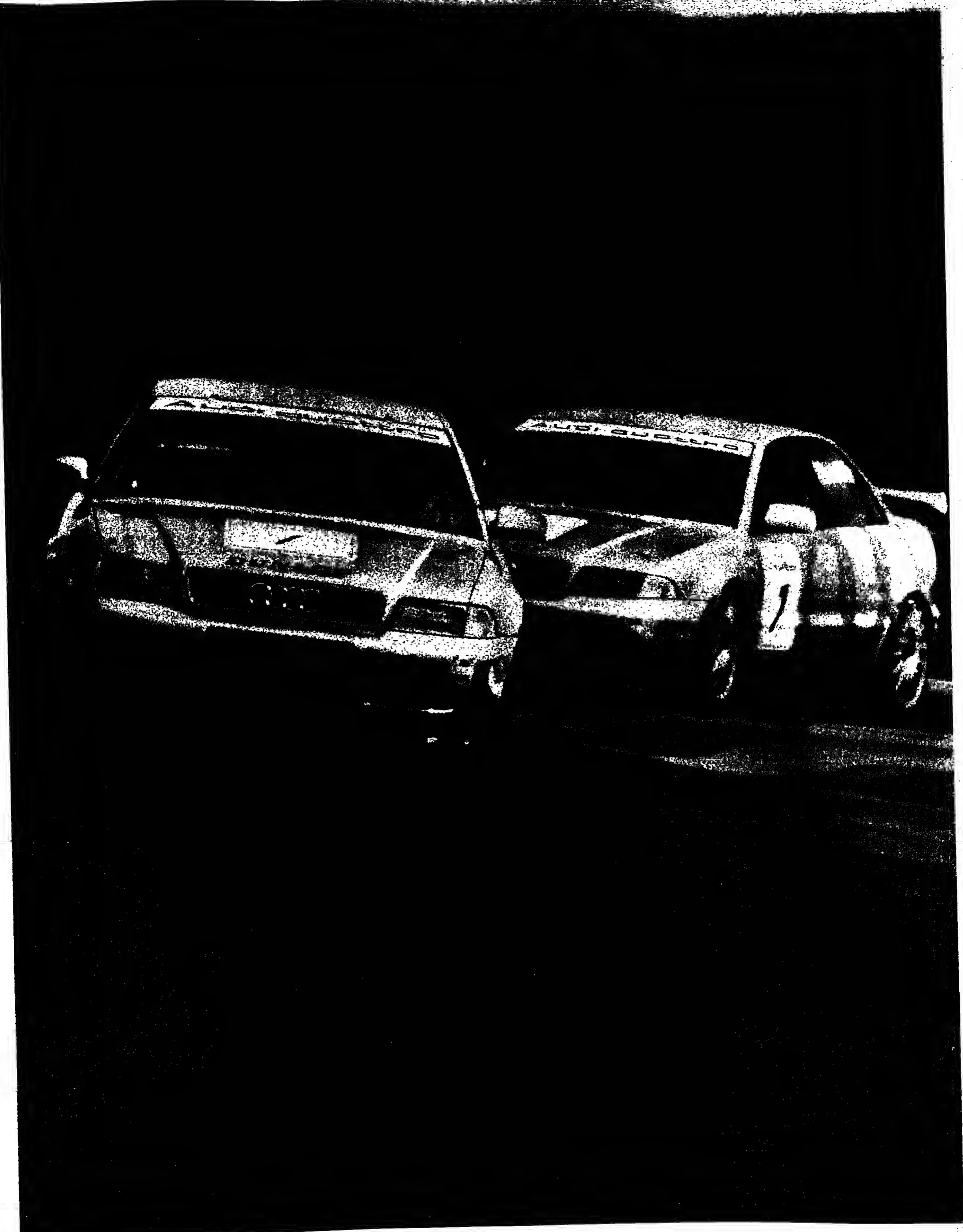
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Déjà vu.

On the tight, twisting Knockhill circuit last weekend, it was business as usual for Audi, the reigning British Touring Car Champions. The two Audi A4 quattros finished first and second in both races, as well as the qualifying rounds. All this despite a 65kg weight penalty. Haven't we been here before?

AUDI 
Vorsprung durch Technik

150

Welcum – Ma an Kernuack deveth the official.

Translation:
Cornish is now
an official
language

Lucy Ward and
Louise Jury

The Cornish language, widely thought to survive only in the dusty books of scholars, has been given a new lease of life after qualifications in the subject gained government recognition.

Examinations run by the Cornish Language Board and accredited by Cornwall's local education authority have been officially approved on the advice of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which oversees qualifications.

The decision will prompt celebrations among Cornish nationalists campaigning for greater recognition of Cornish identity, prompted by a resurgence in Celtic language and music together with a sense of injustice at poor investment in the county by the English across the Tamar.

But the step has exposed old rifts between scholars and speakers over which version of the language is most authentic. Polite but pointed accusations are flying between those who believe late or modern Cornish, dating from 1504, is the purest form, and proponents of a different version based on medieval texts.

The medievalists insist that their language reflects the vocabulary and grammar of Cornish in its 15th-century golden age, while purists mutter dark allegations of the use of computers by their rivals to standardise spellings and forms.

The Cornish Language Board examinations fall into the medieval camp. The secretary of the board, Wells Brown, said: "Cornish died at the end of the 18th century, so you have to decide whether to revive the corpse of a man in his prime or of somebody in the latter stages of life. The bulk of the revivalists decide the best option

is to take the language at its peak in the golden age of the 1400s and revive that."

The 300 or more people studying this version of Cornish in classes around the county each year will speak a "tidied up" language surprisingly similar to their forebears five centuries earlier, Mr Brown contends.

The purists, represented by the Cornish Language Council, have no truck with standardised forms. They stress the three distinct periods of early, medieval and late or "modern" Cornish. Evidence exists of a fisherman speaking the language as late as the 1890s, the council says, and argues that sufficient record remains of the spelling, vocabulary and sound of modern Cornish to reconstruct it with great accuracy.

Richard Gendall, honorary research fellow at the Institute of Cornish Studies and a member of the council, insisted its version represented true historical Cornish. The language board, he claimed, was beginning to lose ground. "They have lost credibility with the universities, it is only a matter of time before they are rummaged."

As the two camps, and some five other bodies claiming to represent true Cornish, continue their scholarly squabbles, the fact remains that committed Cornish speakers remain relatively rare. Last year, fewer than 60 candidates sat the board exams, and 13 were from outside Cornwall, including the Czech Republic, Wales, Germany and the United States.

Jay Gendall, folklorist and member of the language council, admits: "The numbers of people who could sit down and chat in Cornish on any subject from space travel to knights in shining armour are very few. The number who would shout for help in Cornish at the late or modern Cornish was the

richest period of the language. Technological words were being added as recently as Victorian times, coping with the introduction of steam engines to the expansion of tin mining.

Richard Gendall's *Practical Dictionary of Modern Cornish* has dealt a blow to the notion that the Cornish language has been dead for centuries. Previous Cornish dictionaries have always incorporated Breton and Welsh.

In 15 years of research Mr Gendall has gathered 10,000 entries, starting from 1504, the date of the last great medieval Cornish epic. He believes they show that late or modern Cornish was the

most of the work that has been done by Cornish scholars has focused on the medieval period. But this shows us that Cornish was a diverse and vibrant language in the late period."

What is more, Cornish still

has some life left in it yet. Mr Gendall said that many words are still in everyday use.

Among previously unrecorded words is *goleity*,

which he discovered last year

In Semen. It means

lightheadedness.

People living in Cornwall

who still use local dialect

terms "are the last Cornish

speakers", he said yesterday.

"Anyone who uses a dialect word is using live Cornish."

Mr Gendall, 73, from Liskeard, is an honorary research fellow at the Institute of Cornish Studies, which is part of Exeter University.

He began learning the language at the age of four, because his parents had a calendar of Cornish phrases behind the bathroom door.

With the resurgence of interest in Cornish

nationalism, the language is also provoking much interest.

"Cornish people are losing houses, losing dialect, losing jobs," he said. "But there is nothing like the knowledge

that you possess a distinctive language to make you feel you belong together."

About 42 per cent of people living in Cornwall nowadays can claim Cornish ancestry, he said. In some areas, such as Redruth, where the closure of Cornwall's last tin mine was announced this week, the figure is more than 60 per cent. But in other places there are almost no "real" Cornish people left.

□ *Practical Dictionary of Modern Cornish*. Available from selected bookshops, and from Teire ha Javez, Tregill Vean, Menheniot, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 3FL, for £11.60 inc.

Lexicon brings ancient words back to life

Spelt out: Richard Gendall at home yesterday with his new Cornish dictionary. It took him 15 years to research

Louise Jury

A retired teacher has produced the first dictionary to present historically pure Cornish.

Richard Gendall's *Practical Dictionary of Modern Cornish* has dealt a blow to the notion that the Cornish language has been dead for centuries.

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In 15 years of research Mr Gendall has gathered 10,000 entries, starting from 1504, the date of the last great medieval Cornish epic. He believes they show that late or modern Cornish was the

richest period of the language. Technological words were being added as recently as Victorian times, coping with the introduction of steam engines to the expansion of tin mining.

Dr Philip Payton, director of the Institute of Cornish Studies in Truro, said he thought Mr Gendall's dictionary was an "extremely important piece of work".

Most of the work that has been done by Cornish scholars has focused on the medieval period. But this shows us that Cornish was a diverse and vibrant language in the late period."

What is more, Cornish still

A beginner's guide

Melten da. Good morning. **Fatal era why a keef?** How are you? (Literally, How are you doing?)

Benategwana. Goodbye.

Dundaladawhy. Thank you. (Literally, God repay you.)

It's bram an gath. That's nonsense. (Literally, That's the fart of the cat.)

Molatuendaas. A general curse, literally, God's curse in your stomach.

Cornish versions of names:

Tamelin, Cornish for Thomasina.

Jennifer, Cornish for Guinevere.

Catene, Cornish for Kate.

Lowena, increasingly popular Cornish version of Joy.

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It jumps, it moves, it makes you laugh and cry...but is it art?

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The Simpsons, television's cult cartoon comedy series, is now art, a notion that might drive the anarchic, iconoclastic family to hysterics.

Original drawings from the series will feature in their own exhibition, *The Simpsons Animation Art Exhibition*, at the Animation Art Gallery in Great Castle Street, London, from next weekend.

The exhibition will be opened by Yeardley Smith, the actress who is the voice of Lisa Simpson. The drawing themselves are likely to fetch up to £500 each.

In moving from the anima-

tion studios to the art market, *The Simpsons* are part of a growing realisation among galleries of the desirability among collectors for original examples of screen animation. The most common reasons have been nostalgia and interest in cinema and television history, which is why early Disney drawings still fetch the premium prices.

But laterly much more recent animation is appearing in galleries and at auction houses. *The Simpsons* is only six years old. And the successes British animation from Cosgrove Hall studios are also attracting attention.

Russell Singler of the Animation Art Gallery says: "Ani-



Moving pictures: Russell Singler of the Animation Art Gallery with a cel from Disney's 1937 film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

mation art is highly collectible. We specialise in Disney, Warner Brothers and Hanna Barbera, but many of the smaller studios have also produced collectible animation.

The range goes from £20 to several thousand pounds. The most expensive item we have is

a six-dwarf set up from the original 1937 drawings for *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*. That is priced at £5,600.

Alongside Disney in Mr Singler's gallery are Batman and Spiderman animation art, *The Flintstones* from the Eighties (£400), as opposed to the orig-

inal Flintstone drawings from the Sixties which are very rare and would fetch £1,800.

Key characters from our childhoods inspire higher prices. An original storyboard drawing of Cruella De Vil from Disney's *101 Dalmatians* is valued at £2,500. And at

auction in the United States the biggest rarities, drawings from early black-and-white 1930s short films starring Mickey Mouse, have commanded a \$1m price.

Mr Singler said: "Everyone has their favorite cartoon character and we can find them

an original from that series."

Finding the original cels - a single scene which will make up only a fraction of a second of the version seen on film - can be difficult. "Most of the older animation cels were just thrown away," says Mr Singler. "They were never seen as anything of

value but today it's quite different. This is North American heritage."

The Simpsons is art, adds Mr Singler, "because art is something you buy because you enjoy looking at it. It means something to you, inspires emotions and you enjoy it".

Lawrence inquiry to be held in public

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

The inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence will be held in public in a building close to where the black teenager was stabbed to death, it was announced yesterday.

An appeal will be made for people to come forward with evidence. The inquiry, as well as examining the circumstances surrounding the killing, will also have wide-ranging implications for how the police and courts deal with racially motivated

man's 1991 inquiry into the Brixton riots. It will examine the events surrounding the stabbing of the 18-year-old student at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, in 1993.

Sir William met his fellow inquiry members for the first time at the Home Office in London, yesterday. He shook the hand of Tom Cook, the former Deputy Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police, the Rt Rev John Scottam, Bishop of Stepney, and Dr Richard Stone, chairman of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality.

Sir William said in a statement: "We will be holding public hearings later this year and we would like them to take place in Greenwich. A public appeal will be made for people to come forward with evidence. Following that appeal, decisions will be made about who will be called before the inquiry."

The Police Complaints Authority is currently investigating complaints made by the Lawrence family about the Metropolitan Police's handling of the case. They are expected to complete their findings by October. Fuller details of their report will be published - this has only happened on four previous occasions - although witness statements will be kept secret.

Sir William's inquiry will only begin after the authority's report has been completed. The inquiry has been given power to summon any person or obtain any documents. Refusal to testify would be contempt of court and could lead to imprisonment.

"An appeal will be made for people to provide evidence"

crime. Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, the judge heading the inquiry, said yesterday that he intended proceedings to be "as open as possible".

He said public hearings would be held later this year and an appeal would be made for people to come forward. The judge, formerly a High Court judge of the Queen's Bench, was appointed by the Home Secretary Jack Straw to lead the inquiry last week. The announcement followed a meeting between Mr Straw and the Lawrence family.

The inquiry will be given powers last used in Lord Scar-

Police move to stop Nazi rock concert

Ian Burrow

A major police operation is taking place in prevent hundreds of Nazis skinheads from all over Europe staging a rally and rock concert in South Wales today.

After a raid on a house in Cardiff on Thursday, police made four arrests and seized weapons and 30 boxes of literature.

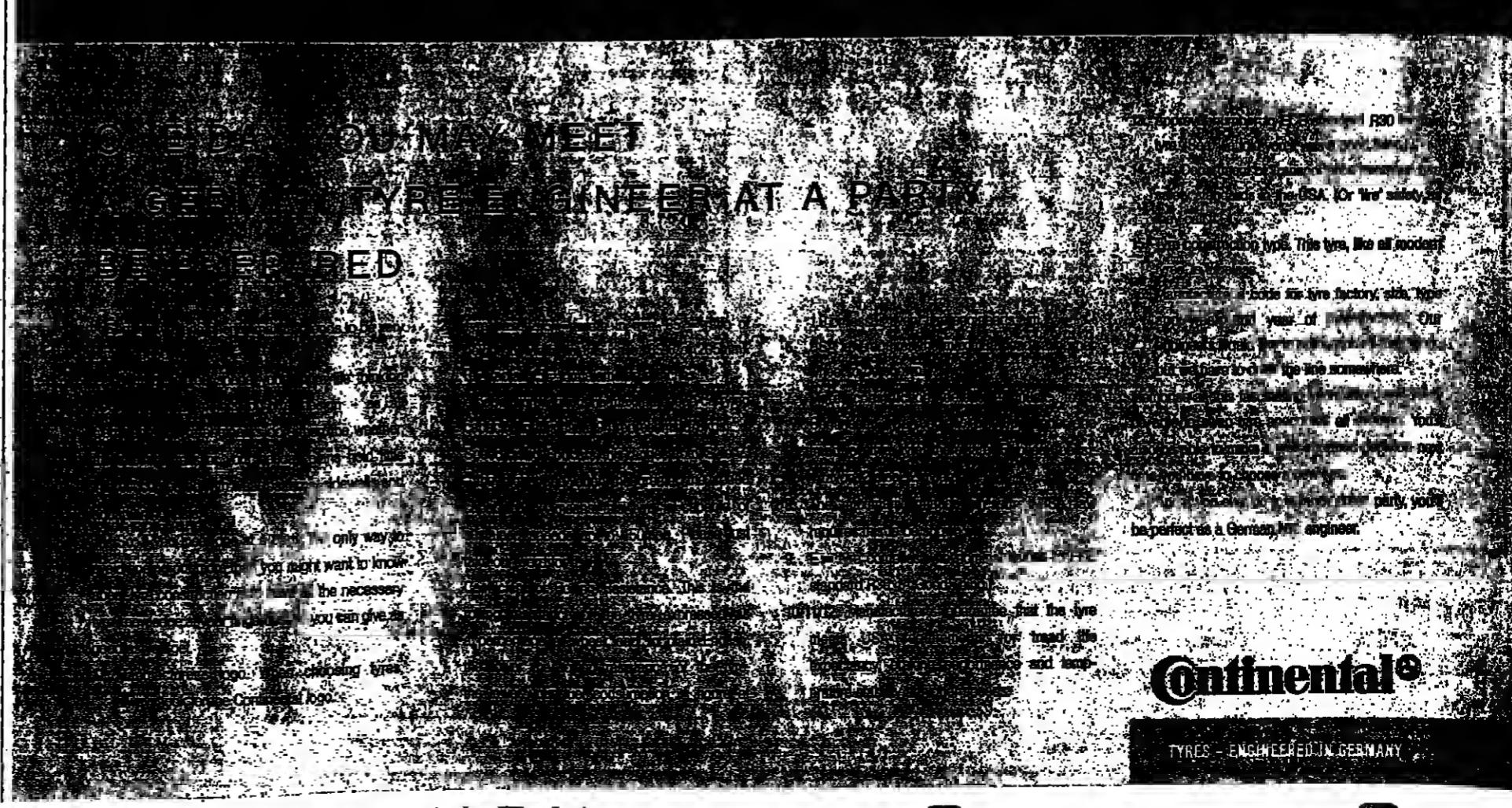
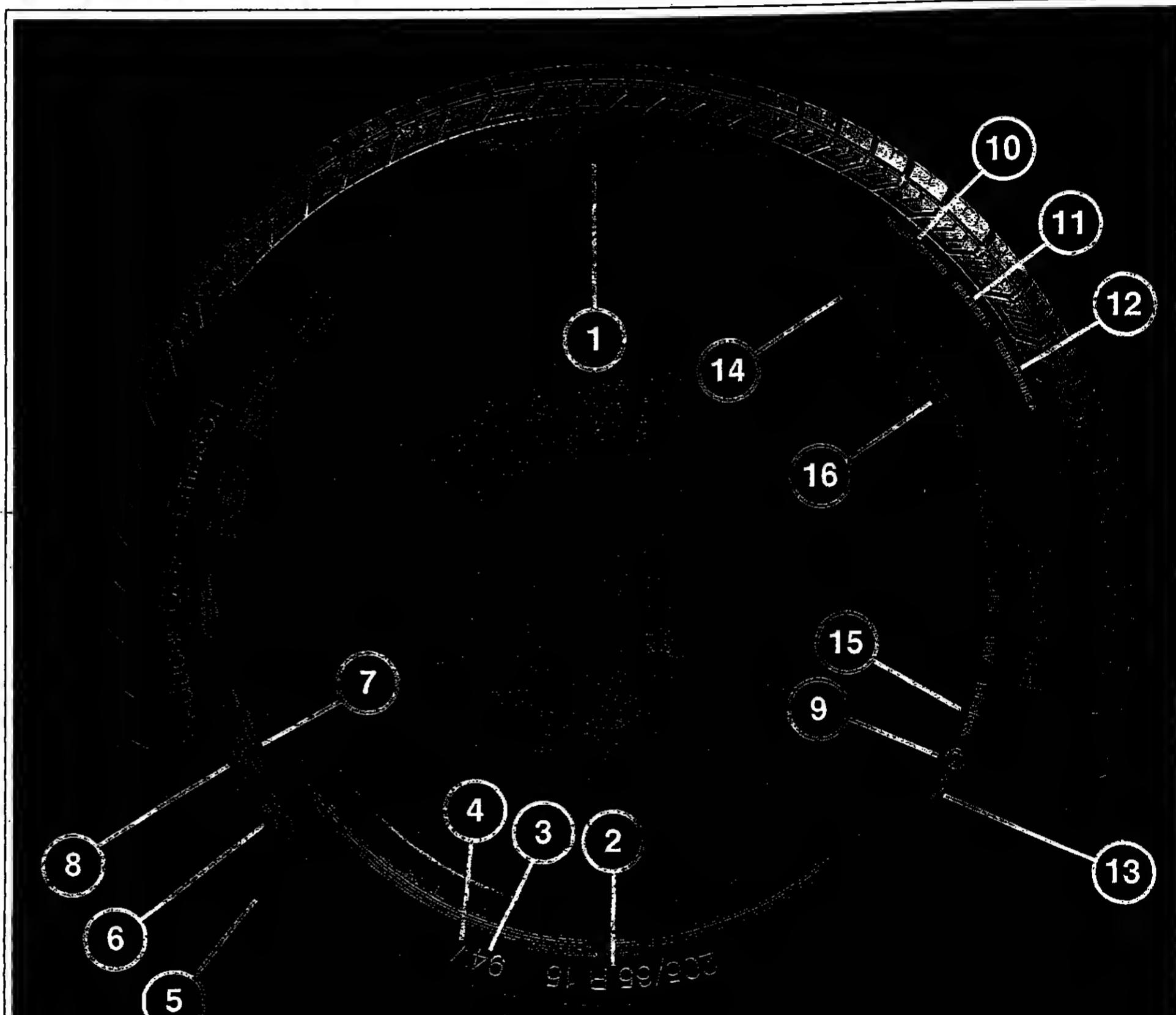
Billy Bartlett, 29, from Cardiff, was charged with public order offences and released on bail. His girlfriend and two other men, both Americans, were released without charge.

Blood and Honour, the Nazi skinhead group which is behind the event, is hoping to attract up to 1,000 supporters, with around 150 skinheads travelling from France, Germany and Belgium. But the police initiative was to play as headline acts.

day threatening to create a massive loss-of-face for the organisers who are believed to have been searching for last minute alternative venues in the west of England.

Plans for the so-called "Aryan Music Fest" have alarmed politicians including the South Wales MEP, Glynis Kinnock, and the Plaid Cymru president, Dafydd Wigley MP, who have called for a ban. And the Anti-Nazi League has called on supporters to rally in Cardiff and Bridgend.

The British Nazi skins, who are highly regarded by their peers in other countries, face humiliation over the climb-down. Similar events are staged regularly in Germany, with 1,000 people attending and British skinhead bands invited to play as headline acts.



Drenched in Devon, but there's always a sunny side

Thousands were heading to the coast yesterday to take advantage of the hottest weekend the year so far while certain parts of the country were still mopping up from some of the worst storms in decades.

With temperatures in central and southern England set to reach 30C, the sudden good weather follows a week in which parts of Britain have suffered torrential rain, flooding hundreds of properties and closing scores of roads.

South Wales and the Southwest were the most badly affected parts of the country. In east Devon, where three inches of rain fell in just 45 minutes on Thursday night, the worst flash floods for decades forced the evacuation of nearly a thousand holiday-makers from a campsite near Honiton.

In the village of Ottery St Mary, the water reached three feet in places. The town's fire station was flooded, and fire-fighters' cars had to be rescued. Martin Weiler, of the Environment Agency, described the severe thunderstorm as "very unusual".

By yesterday morning, however, the heavy rain was

receding and mopping-up operations could begin to clear roads blocked by the deluge. The road-rescue organisations are advising motorists that most roads in the area are passable with care.

"The A30, the main route in and out of the West Country, has been reopened, but some minor roads remain under water," said an RAC spokeswoman.

But the recent rain is still likely to add to problems on the roads as thousands of people head for beaches in Devon and Cornwall.

Meanwhile, the bookmakers William Hill have cut the odds on the temperature reaching 100F (37.8C) this year from 50/1 to 33-1.

Graham Sharpe, Hill's spokesman, said: "On the hottest day of the year so far, we have taken a string of bets, and it could cost us a payout of up to £250,000 if 100F is reached for the first time."

The sunny weather is expected to break at the beginning of next week giving a gloomy outlook. Thunder showers will hit most parts of the country.

Wash out: A family carrying their belongings after heavy rain flooded their campsite at Ottery St Mary, Devon

Photograph: Guy Newman/Apex

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Wash out: A family carrying their belongings after heavy rain flooded their campsite at Ottery St Mary, Devon

Photograph: Guy Newman/Apex

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The world hates the French ... and they don't like each other

PARIS DAYS

"Great Debate in the British Press," said the headline in *Le Figaro*. "Are the French Detestable?"

The *Daily Mail* sent a reporter to find out. He discovered the French were appalling. Was there any chance that the *Mail* might have reached the opposite conclusion?

The great debate has been raging for three weeks (or, if you insist, for over 900 years). It started with a survey of tourists by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, which concluded that many foreign visitors, and not just the British, regarded France as a wonderful country, scarred by the fact that it was inhabited by the French.

The British found the natives arrogant, rude and disorganized; the Germans thought they were arrogant, rude and unwashed. And so on.

This was cheered in the British tabloid press as an own goal; that is, the French are so insufferable that they are forced to admit it themselves. In truth, the report pointed to something else: the French, or some of the French, are aware that they climb (one way or another) up the nasal cavities of foreign visitors and they are trying to do something about it.

In my experience, the French, especially younger generations of French people, are not quite so implacably and splendidly rude to foreigners as they used to be.

The second salvo of cross-Channel bile was fired by the small Cotswold town of Stow-in-the-Wold, which might now, perhaps, consider changing its name to Stuck-in-the-Mud. Its parish council rejected a plan to twin with a French town, citing grievances ranging from the mad cow dispute to the Hundred Years War.

Twinning, if it has any purpose at all, is intended to overcome dotty and vacuous prejudices of this kind: Stow preferred to cherish its prejudices.

The French were rather wounded by this rejection. They knew the British liked to make fun of them but did not suspect such outright hostility existed. Some of the post-Stow commentary in French press was also over the top; it failed to point out that scores of British towns and villages are contentedly twinned with similar places in France and, in some cases, dissimilar places.

What, for instance, does Bolton have in common with Le Mans? And yet the towns have been happily twinned for more

than 20 years. (I did try to check how many French towns and villages are twinned with British ones; but this is August. The only person at the French twinning association, Côte d'Or, who knew how to work the computer was away on holiday.)

Julian Barnes, the francophile British novelist, attempted this week to place the disorganized-detestable-French debate in perspective. In an open letter to the people of France, published in *Le Figaro*, he told them, in effect: yes, you are awful but that's what makes you French and you mustn't change. We would hate that even more.

He summed up: "Your historic role in Europe, especially for the British, is to embody Otherness ... Don't wash just to please the Germans. Don't organise yourselves better just to please the British. Do you see that pavement? Let your dog do its business on it without hesitation. It's your patriotic duty."

There is a rich paradox here. France is already the most visited country in the world. The decline of the franc means France is likely to break all records for receiving foreigners this year: well over 60 million, including 10 million from Britain.

Not only do many of these visitors say they dislike the French; many of the French say they dislike the visitors. As the satirical newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* commented, turning the conclusion of the Parisian visitor survey on its head: "The French like tourism but not tourists."

They are hardly alone in this. But, as I tried to explain once before (only to be accused of French-bashing), there is a particular difficulty for the French in getting on with foreigners because they don't read

"Yes, you are awful but that's what makes you French ... don't wash to please the Germans or get organised to please the British"

Julian Barnes



Essence of Frenchness: How accurate is the image of a nation implacably and splendidly rude to foreigners? There are signs of change, especially among the younger generations

Photograph: UPP

ily, on a casual basis, get on with one another. Chumminess is not a French talent.

More precisely, France operates on the basis of familiarity and established groups of relatives, friends and clients. If you are a stranger, whether foreign or otherwise, you should expect the minimum service and maximum charge. Once you become an established member of a community, how-

ever informal, everything changes.

I go to the same cafe every morning to read the French newspapers. Madame, the patronne, is fearlessly rude to foreign tourists who show the slightest hesitation in giving their order. But she brings my usual coffee and croissant with a smile. This week, with half of Paris closed down, she was unable to secure croissants from her usual suppliers.

On Monday, she apologised, almost tearfully: I could have no croissant with my coffee. By Tuesday, she had located an alternative source. There were no croissants displayed on the counter. They were too precious to offer to the public.

But she came to me furtively and triumphantly with a croissant on a small white plate and said: "Look, I managed to get you one..."

I sat staring out at the deserted boulevard, chomping proudly what might have been — Marlon Brando eat your heart out — *The Last Croissant* in Paris.

John Lichfield

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John Lichfield

Miracle-worker pulls off deal among feuding Bosnians

Marcus Tanner

The Europeans wheedle and threaten to little or no effect. United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright harangues Presidents Tuđman and Milošević in public — and in vain. But when Richard Holbrooke steps back onto the stage the feuding leaders of former Yugoslavia suddenly, almost miraculously, agree to a host of issues that have held up all progress on the Bosnian peace deal for months and even threatened to plunge the country back into armed conflict.

Yesterday Mr Holbrooke, the US envoy who pulled off the peace deal for Bosnia at Dayton, Ohio, in December 1995, pulled off another deal on diplomatic posts, the telephone system and passports — all of which had appeared totally insoluble until he arrived back in former Yugoslavia two days ago on another whirlwind diplomatic mission at the request of President Bill Clinton.

Under the package, Bosnia's ambassador to the United Nations will be a Muslim. Wash-

ington will go to a Serb and Tokyo to a Bosnian Croat. The other 30-odd diplomatic postings will be distributed equally between the three communities.

Leaders of the Muslim-Croat federation and the self-governing Bosnian Serb entity also agreed to set up a commission on the Bosnian telephone network — the business of a single company code having bedevilled ties be-

tween the two Bosnian entities and assumed enormous, sinister, significance for the Serbs.

Several disputes evaded solution even by Mr Holbrooke. Among them are Bosnia's new currency and final responsibility for issuing passports and resolving questions of citizenship. Both are pressing issues for the Bosnian Serbs, as they will affect their independence from the Sarajevo government. The Serbs want to unify their currency with Belgrade, not Sarajevo. They also want to give several hundred thousand Serb refugees from Croatia full citizenship, which Sarajevo opposes.

But the US envoy was satisfied. "These are steps forward and pretty solid ones," he said after 10 hours of meetings.

The US and the European Union states suspended recognition of Bosnia's present, Muslim-dominated ambassadorial corps after an internationally imposed deadline for the distribution of posts among Muslims Serbs and Croats ran out on 1 August. German officials yesterday said they would now

recommend their partners to resume diplomatic contact with Sarajevo immediately as a result of the talks.

Mr Holbrooke yesterday headed for the northern town of Banja Luka to show his support for the so-called "moderate" Bosnian Serb President, Biljana Plavšić, in her power struggle with the former Bosnian Serb president and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić.

After his triumph at Dayton in 1995, which ended Bosnia's bloody three-and-a-half-year civil war, Mr Holbrooke left the diplomatic field for private business. Since then, Bosnia's peace process has all but collapsed and the more emotive tactics of his successors in mediation have only persuaded the Bosnian factions that they can get away with not fulfilling any of the Dayton provisions. President Clinton's fears that it would not be possible to withdraw 8,000 US peacekeepers next year, therefore, led to the bullish Mr Holbrooke being recalled for this one-off special mission.



Holbrooke: Recalled for special diplomatic mission

international

significant shorts

Buthelezi party storms out of peace talks with the ANC

South Africa's Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party withdrew from talks to end bitter decade-long turf wars with President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. The Inkatha chairman, Ben Ngubane, cited the bias shown against his party at Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings this week as the main reason. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the IFP leader and Home Affairs Minister in Mr Mandela's cabinet, was accused at hearings this week of knowing about killings carried out by IFP-aligned hit-squads.

Reuters — Durban

Bomb damages Swedish stadium

A bomb destroyed part of a sports stadium in Stockholm but no one was hurt. The device, which exploded in the press stand, spread debris and bricks into a nearby street. There was no warning of the explosion, which followed a number of attacks on sports arenas. Swedish media have linked them to opponents of Stockholm's bid for the 2004 Summer Olympics. "I'm very sorry to hear about it," the International Olympic Committee president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, said.

AP — Stockholm

Rebel bishop denounces Pope's visit

The rebel French bishop Jacques Gaillot accused the Pope of encouraging militant anti-abortion groups by honouring one of their heroes during a visit to France this month. Mr Gaillot, ousted by the Vatican from his diocese in 1995 because of his views, said a visit to the grave of the Jerome Lejeune would be seen as symbolic support for the militant groups.

Reuters — Paris

Suspected spy beaten to death

A man suspected of being a police spy was beaten to death at a Nairobi rally and hundreds of opposition supporters took to the streets to press demands for reform. Some 1,000 activists turned up for the rally to hear speakers demand reforms from President Daniel arap Moi before elections due this year. A man identified as Gilbert Ahanya Simiyu was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.

Reuters — Nairobi

Italy plays down Somalia torture cases

Italy confirmed that soldiers tortured Somalis on a peace-keeping mission but a report said the abuses were not widespread and senior officers were largely blameless. The report was produced by a commission set up after the press printed allegations of rape, murder and brutality by Italian soldiers serving in a US-led humanitarian mission to Somalia from 1992 to 1994.

Reuters — Rome

Sob story on Elvis anniversary

The town of Deurne has been rocked by claims that a bust of Elvis Presley has started to weep. As the 20th anniversary of his death approaches, a Dutchman says his statue of the King has begun to shed "tears of joy". He is crying for all his fans around the world, Toon Nieuwenhuisen said. "He knows how much they love him."

Reuters — Deurne

Mean greens wreck kitchen

When an explosion rocked a flat in Vladimir, near Moscow, firefighters and police scaled a ladder to a shattered kitchen window, unsure of what they would find. Rather than a bomb, they discovered only two shattered jars of pickled cucumbers that a housewife had placed on a shelf in the sun.

AP — Moscow

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Labour's first 100 days

A stronger, fairer Britain? Ministers give their report on progress so far

Labour marked its first 100 days in office yesterday by announcing that Tony Blair will give an annual statement on the Government's performance.

The *Independent* asked Cabinet ministers to provide an audit of what they believe they have achieved during the 100 days. We also returned to our panel of voters in Redditch, a group which personified the millions who switched their votes from Tory to Labour.

Issuing a check-list for the first 100 days, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, said the Government was delivering its side of a contract for a "stronger, fairer, modern Britain" without any sense of complacency.

"We believe we have got off to a flying start.

This is not the end of our crusade, but only the beginning," he said.

Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, said it had "not been easy" and hard decisions had been taken.

Ministers across Whitehall have told *The Independent* in their end-of-term reports that they have found the pace of change "breath-taking".

The highlight of the 100 days for many was the decision by the IRA to renew its ceasefire in Northern Ireland. But there have been many more changes, from independence for the Bank of England to next month's referendums in Wales and Scotland on devolution.

Leading article, page 13
Commentators, page 15

JOHN PRESCOTT Deputy Prime Minister

By integrating environment, transport and regional development into one ministry, and putting the Deputy Prime Minister in charge, we have sent the clearest signal that the environment is at the heart of Government thinking. From ambitious greenhouse gas targets to local council services, this department impinges on the quality of people's lives in ways large and small.

We are boosting social housing, releasing nearly £1bn of capital receipts. And we are not just concerned about the quantity of housing but the quality. Our showpiece Millennium Housing Project at Greenwich will meet the best technical, social and ecological standards. Our Environmental Task Force will match skills to need, from home insulation to nature conservation. We are revitalising local democracy, for example offering Londoners an elected mayor and a strategic assembly.

Plans for Regional Development Agencies have been overwhelmingly endorsed, allowing people to create wealth in their own communities instead of relying on others.

Our integrated transport policy will aim to shift the emphasis to public transport and relieve road congestion.

JACK STRAW Home Secretary

My priority when I arrived was, and is, to overhaul the system dealing with young offenders. The *Crime and Disorder Bill* will put many of these reforms into law, including measures to deliver our early pledge for a fast-track for persistent young offenders; ensure they repair the damage they do to victims and the community; and make parents more responsible for the children before their.

The Bill will strengthen communities by giving the police and local authorities new powers to tackle disorder and will create new offences of racially-motivated violence and harassment.

Prisons have taken up much of my time over the last 100 days. Last month, I awarded the Service an extra £43m to cope with overcrowding. My department is presently drawing up legislation to incorporate into UK law the European Convention on Human Rights, and last month I announced that the 1999 European elections would be fought under PR system.

Since May I have announced: a judicial inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence murder; further support for crime victims; new measures to help prisoners find work; proposals for a new offence of corruption to include bribery of MPs; and plans for a new Race Relations Forum.

ROBIN COOK Foreign Secretary

In the first fortnight in office I drew up a Mission Statement which set out four key objectives:

To enhance Britain's security by promoting international stability and fostering strong alliances;

To make maximum use of our overseas posts to promote trade abroad and create jobs at home;

To improve our quality of life by working with others to protect the common environment and tackle international crime;

To secure respect for Britain's commitment to building a strong international community based on democratic values.

In Europe, we announced our intention to sign up to the Social Charter. During the conclusion of the Inter-Governmental Conference we defended our national interests robustly without indulging in petty obstructionism.

The Government has played a leading role in strengthening the international community's resolve to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia. We have shown our determination to ensure that those indicted for war crimes are brought to justice.

Elsewhere, we have ensured the successful transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China and begun the process of building a new relationship between Russia and an enlarged Nato.

Reforming the welfare state to reduce poverty and welfare dependency is a priority of this Government. We believe that work is the best form of welfare for people of working age.

In July, we launched our New Deal for Lone Parents - a programme which will provide opportunities to work for half a million lone parents on Income Support with school age children, using 2200m of the windfall tax.

Childcare is vital for many women to get into work. The Budget put childcare at the heart of our economic policy and took the first step towards our National Childcare Strategy. This will make childcare more accessible and affordable.

Disabled people with long-term ill health are also being offered new opportunities. We will develop a

The Blair revolution ... in their own words



People power: Tony Blair promises an annual performance review

three months - on the devolution referendums and phasing out the Assisted Places scheme.

We look forward to major bills delivering our manifesto commitments: devolution; crime and disorder standards in schools; the European convention on human rights; reform of the lottery; a national minimum wage; the London referendum; and regional development.

CLARE SHORT International Development Secretary

When Tony Blair spoke at the UN Earth Summit in New York in June, the atmosphere was electric. My Department's contribution to the speech was the commitment to support the international target of halving world poverty by 2015 and to reverse the decline in our aid spend until we reach the 0.7 of GNP UN target.

The OECD's development committee has picked up targets from UN Conferences and called on the world to commit to halving extreme poverty by 2015. This means setting all the children of the world into primary education, basic health care, and clean water for all. I have set myself the task of doing all I can to mobilise the political will.

My White Paper setting out the details of this work will be published shortly. My aim is to leave behind me an international commitment to poverty elimination and the measurement of progress year on year.

ANN TAYLOR Leader of the House

Management of the Government's heavy legislative programme: modernisation of the House of Commons, and anti-drugs co-ordination have been the key areas of my work since we have been in Government.

In the first 100 days, 18 Government Bills were introduced (compared with 10 in 1979); six Bills received Royal Assent; four White Papers were published; and 15 oral statements made.

I have set about modernising the House of Commons, which has included improving Prime Minister's Question Time and setting up a Select Committee on Modernisation. In the autumn a Daily Agenda will replace the order paper. Some Bills will be carried over to the next session, ensuring vital work is not wasted and there will be better pre-legislative inquiry stage, with consultation within and outside the House.

Drugs Challenge Fund awards have been set up, with £2m going to 79 anti-drugs partnerships. An extra £1m has been generated from business and voluntary sectors. We also plan to review for UK Anti Drugs Co-ordinator.

JACK CUNNINGHAM Agriculture Minister

Our manifesto aims were to make consumer involvement and protection the recognised cornerstone of MAP's role, to improve standards of animal welfare; and to get the EU ban on British exports lifted as soon as possible.

Within a matter of days, I announced my intention to update the ministry to become more open and accountable including preparing a new mission statement and a change of name.

By mid-June Elliot Morley, Minister for Fisheries and the Countryside, had drawn up new rules to improve the welfare of livestock being transported. A tough approach to hygiene standards in abattoirs was also pursued.

Jeff Rooker, Minister for Food Safety, announced on 21 July that to improve openness and information to consumers the brand names of products tested in food surveys would be given when such results were published.

On 26 June, the McDonald's food group announced that they would return to using British beef, and Burger King did likewise several days later.

On 23 July, the European Union agreed to introduce Europe-wide controls to remove specified materials from beef carcasses - matching existing UK measures.

DR DAVID CLARK Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Office of Public Service

Our manifesto said that our aim would be to rebuild trust between the Government and the people by: cleaning up politics; rooting out public spending waste and inefficiency; and listening to the people and developing services to meet their needs.

In 100 days, we have made a significant start in making the government a genuine servant of the people. We have started by:

Changing the culture of secrecy in Whitehall by showing our commitment for Freedom of Information legislation.

Announcing steps to make quangos fully answerable.

Issuing a tough new Code stating that ministers should be accountable to Parliament.

Setting up a new Better Regulation Unit to reduce burdens on business, and ensure that regulations are necessary.

Planning the introduction of a Food Standards Agency.

Considering a People's Panel whereby the public tell us their views on government services.

Tory deserters breathe sigh of relief

Michael Streeter

The land of Mondeo man has given a cautious welcome - a C+ rating - to the first 100 days of New Labour.

Those on *The Independent's* election panel in Redditch, Worcestershire, who switched their votes to Tony Blair see little reason to regret their change; most are quietly impressed with the party's move to power. There is little sense of excitement though, just relief.

Equally, most of those who stayed with the devil they knew and voted Conservative can pick out enough wrong in just three months to vindicate their decision.

The one issue which unifies them is concern over money - and the regular increases in interest rates since polling day.

Mark Redfern, 29, an engineer, who voted Labour for the first time, said:

mondeo

MAN

"Since they've been in everything seems to have gone up. My mortgage costs about £10 to £15 a month extra."

But he adds: "I think I always knew the rates would have to go up once the election was over. I'm still glad they got in, but I think I'll be able to give a better view in 12 months."

Brian Nicholls, a butcher aged 60, who also made the switch for the first time, is even more cautious. "I think it was a smart move of the Chancellor's to let the Bank of England decide interest rates, as it gets him out of hot water. But it's early days, isn't it?" he said.

A former British Gas travel manager, Roger Frost, 54, likes the calm, purposeful way the Home Secretary Jack Straw has acted, citing the inquiry into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

"I also still like the way Tony Blair is handling things. I've no regrets. The interest rates help with the savings."

Craig Coates, 37, a local authority administrator, admits he was a "sceptical" first-time Labour voter, but is so far impressed with the Government's positive attitude. "I knew the Conservatives were keeping interest rates down so the rises haven't surprised me."

But he added: "Nothing's really hit them yet, has it?"

The caution gives way to outright scepticism among the Tory voters. Susan Lovett, 38, a former sales consultant, is struck by the activity of New Labour. "They seem to be going at a fair

old pace, but I'm not sure they are achieving a lot. For example on devolution - how effective is it going to be?"

Meanwhile, Denise Sparkes, 35, a dressmaker, is unhappy at plans to charge for university tuition and suggests the age of consent for gays should be lowered to 16. "And I was proved right on interest rates - it's costing us £40 a month more."

But Lionel Baird, 52, a paramedic, believes he may not have been right in voting Tory. "It can leave a bad taste in the mouth but sometimes you have to admit you've got it wrong. So far I've been pleasantly surprised with the Government."

Roger Jones, 42, the only one of the panel to vote Liberal Democrat, was less enthusiastic. "There's been nothing earth-shattering so far, it's been middle of the road - what some people have described as a lukewarm government."

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100 days

Mr Blair's first 100 days: we like what we see

Tony Blair himself was never that keen on the idea of the "Hundred Days". That sort of thing usually ends in tears, promising the Earth, and that making a difference would take time. That was before the election, of course, and now looks like a clever feint so that we would be the more surprised by the energy and pace of the Government's do-it.

But he also said that "the project" would not become clear to people "until you are in government and you're doing things". In opposition, he only ever gave us an anti-ideology. He was against dogma; a shirt-sleeved manager with common-sense, pragmatic views. And so it came to pass in government. Equally, in opposition he never gave us his character. He adjusted his message instinctively for different audiences, not pretending to be things he was not, but never revealing quirks or prejudices that might offend. The voters had no objection to what they knew of him, but now they know him better, and it should be easier to disentangle his personality from the various personae constructed for him. So what do Mr Blair's first 100 days tell us about the character of the man?

On the first day of the new dawn there was a carefully orchestrated photo-opportunity in Downing Street which one Labour official

with an ironic sense of history said was supposed to look like a "spontaneous outpouring of workers from factories and offices". The portrayal of Everyman with his stylish wife and attractive children amid a sea of Union Jacks was propaganda, but it was also true to the man. Despite the unconvincing tone of Mr Blair's self-deprecating jokes about not recognising himself as Prime Minister, there is something resolutely unstatesmanlike about him. Much of his first few weeks in office were spent abroad, feted as, if not the great young hope for the world, the brightest prospect for managerial centrism (with a social conscience) since Kennedy. But television footage of him on a bicycle or running from one meeting to the next at the Amsterdam summit did not convert into a largeness of stature. This is not a fault, however, but a strength. Mr Blair cannot be a larger-than-life personality because he does not have the self-blindness of a Thatcher, or a Kohl, or a Kennedy. The "people who live in the dark" may want to present him as a conviction politician in the Thatcher mould, but ultimately they cannot do it because that is not what he wants to be.

Instead, Mr Blair is supremely good at epitomising what we would like to be as a nation. When he does his "I am one of you" routines (closely modelled, one suspects, on Clinton's "I feel your pain"), what he really seems to be saying is: "Doo you want to be one of



me?" And, on the whole, we do. An overwhelming majority of the nation would like to be smart but casual and drive a Ford Galaxy full of football- and Spice-Girl-mad children. And have the exciting job and the high-powered (and attractive) spouse. Everyone in Britain aspires to be informal middle class – even toffs and royalty – with all three members of Prince Charles's crowded marriage falling over each other in their rush to kick a football around the Chequers lawn.

There is something else, too, that we have learnt of Mr Blair's modesty since 1 May. He has been accused of being autocratic, while beginning a programme of democratic power-sharing more radical than anything since the Civil War. What his critics have failed to see is that 10 Downing Street may be at the centre of a tightly controlled web in matters of presentation, but the initiative for policy has genuinely been devolved to departments, especially the devolution from Downing Street to Mr Blair's closest political ally, Gordon Brown. David Blunkett astutely recognised the importance of this point, flooding the Chancellor with memos. Mr Brown is firmly in the driving seat when it comes to the domestic policy decisions that matter: independence for the Bank of England, the "welfare-to-work" programme, billions from the reserves for education. The one big decision directly attributed to the Prime Minister was heavily

presentational – the go-ahead for the Millennium Dome – which is why the job then passed on to Mr Blair's other closest political ally, Peter Mandelson.

It is clearer than ever that policy will be looked at regardless of where it comes from. In his eagerness to bring in business leaders, Mr Blair has tripped up on the sleaze issue, simply because it never occurred to him that he would be judged by the same standards as the outgoing government. But in the longer term, the significance of Lord Simon's appointment is as a token of Mr Blair's pluralism. He has brought in Liberal Democrats and given free rein to Labour figures such as Frank Field and Stephen Byers, whose views most jangle ancient inner-party nerves.

And proposals will be tested against pragmatic criteria – and, above all, market-tested with focus groups and opinion polls. Mr Blair would no doubt protest that policies will also be judged against "values", but this is perhaps the largest area of outstanding doubt. So far, what is striking about his values is how unspecific and consensual they are. Neither the values nor the character of Mr Blair have been tested by crisis – partly because this Labour Government unexpectedly faced a sterling appreciation crisis, rather than devaluation, on coming to office. Until something does go seriously wrong, all judgements are bound to remain heavily provisional.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Health authority covered up failures in psychiatric care

Sir, Your report "Inquiry into deaths finds mental health unit at fault" (2 August) has uncharacteristically missed the point. Sane does not object to families remaining anonymous if they wish. Nor do we want to see blame placed on individual doctors or nurses, although, as professionals, we need to know why the system fails so frequently, and who should be made accountable.

In May 1994, faced with increasing public concern about homicides involving mental patients, the NHS Executive instructed health authorities to initiate independent inquiries into every case. The publication of these

painstaking inquiries has been the major source of evidence of what has gone wrong with psychiatric care both in the community and in hospital, and they are widely used in attempts to improve the service nationally.

When Paul Medley walked out of the Royal Oldham Hospital's psychiatric unit in September 1994 and killed Harry Johnstone, the West Pennine Health Authority set up an independent inquiry, as it was required to do so. However, it also asked that the inquiry should consider the cases of four other "clients" of the hospital.

Unlike any previous homicide inquiry, the report of the inquiry

into "the treatment and care of five individual patients by Oldham NHS Trust" was not published, on grounds of patient confidentiality. The recommendations and some conclusions of the report did not mention the homicide, nor that the other four individuals were dead, having committed suicide. Thus patient confidentiality was, sadly, no longer an issue. All four cases were the subject of a coroner's inquest and were therefore in the public domain.

Keith Joces, commissioning director for the West Pennine Health Authority, said he could not compromise confidentiality, and that he had personally approached

the families, who had unanimously asked that the report should not be published. Within hours, Mary Smith, mother of one of the suicides, broadcast on radio and television asking for publication of the full report. Another of the families has called the report a "cover-up".

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the health authority used the cloak of confidentiality to obscure the truth about the specific failures in mental health care provided in Oldham.

MARJORIE WALLACE
Chief Executive
Sane, The Mental Health Charity
London NW1

No excuses for drug users, whoever they are

Sir, James Humphreys ("The cost to society is so great it makes me dizzy", 7 August) appears to believe that his taking his turn to collect drugs for his friends is purely a matter between him and them. They are, after all, "adults", as he informs us. The point is, of course, that his opinion of the arrangement is completely irrelevant. He was doing something which he knew was illegal, and deserved the consequences.

There are indeed many people in prison who should not be, and the system should be so administered that petty and young offenders are not condemned by association with career criminals to a life of crime. Humphreys says that he is dizzy by the cost to society of imprisonment, but does not seem to acknowledge that, as a representative of the best-educated people in that society, it is his duty to contribute to its improvement. Instead he embraces the habits of a criminal.

Well-educated people who, rather than regret crimes committed out of self-indulgence rather than anything resembling need or pressure, say that the system is wrong, deserved the excesses of the last Home Secretary, whose exit from office is otherwise heartily to be welcomed.

CJ T SHEPPARD
Southampton

Sir, Those who lobby against the legalisation of soft drugs try to justify criminalising something no less dangerous than nicotine or alcohol.

The hypocrisy of this situation is infuriating. James Humphreys may well have been prosecuted, convicted, or even sentenced by somebody who enjoys occasional drug use. The only difference between Mr Humphreys and these respectable citizens is that his drug of choice is considered illegal.

ALEC McFACHRAN
Lichfield, Staffordshire

Sir, Perhaps James Humphreys has had time to reflect on the fact that, although he has never directly harmed another person, by buying illegal drugs he fuelled the fire of warfare between rival drug dealers. His money might well have supplied them with the money to purchase weapons and given them the ability to make the lives of innocent people thoroughly miserable.

Can he categorically state that the dealer he bought from did not ever sell to under-18s and is not connected, in any way, to those who protect their trade with violence?

KAREN DIMMOCK
Stourbridge,
West Midlands



"Endearing but villainous animals": the Boston raccoon

'Mythical' raccoon spotted in Boston

Sir, Mary Dejevsky says of raccoons: "these endearing but villainous animals are just another component of the American myth... the truth is that they do not exist." ("The great suburban sinner who has gone to ground", 4 August).

I have never yet photographed a unicorn successfully, but Ms Dejevsky may like to see this photograph of the "mythical" raccoon taken from a second-floor

window in Monument Square, Charlestown, Boston, Massachusetts, at 7.30am on the morning of 15 July this year. He was seated on an old fire escape which stops at first-floor level, some 12 feet above the ground.

I wonder if any reader can advise me on the best time of day to see a unicorn?

LIZ FINCH
Liverpool

Othello: educated gentleman of any colour

Sir, Why do we accept the assertion that "not white" = "black"? ("Can it be wrong to 'black up' for Othello?", 7 August)? Othello was a Moor: strictly, a person of Berber and Arab descent; but a word more loosely used as the time of Shakespeare to indicate any persons of North African or Islamic origin. He may indeed have had black ancestry (the trans-Saharan slave trade flourished for thousands of years and is rumoured to continue to this day) but this is not necessary. All that is certain from the text is that he was darker-skinned than 16th-century Venetians, to whom "black" meant anything swarthy than themselves.

Far more important than his colour is Othello's cultural background, from a military Islamic society strongly influenced by an ancient and sophisticated Persian culture, and with trading contacts with India and China. It is unlikely he would have reached the rank of general in his own country, let alone Venice, without education in science and the arts. Arab culture saw no incompatibility between a soldier's profession and an appreciation of literature and poetry. They were essential, social

accomplishments, hence those poetic and storytelling skills which captivated Desdemona. Yet this sophisticated gentleman is too often portrayed as an unpolished simpleton played upon by the cunning Venetian.

Cast a man of any colour as Othello but, please, let us see a more imaginative interpretation than theatrical tradition has afforded us. DEBORAH TOMPKINSON
Maidenhead, Berkshire

Sir: Film and television particularly have made us used to seeing the "real thing", but this consistent realism may incur its own losses. Some of the greatest and most memorable performances in the recent past have been big make-up jobs: for me Laurence Olivier's Othello, Charles Laughton's Quasimodo, Alec Guinness's Fagin, and (best of all, perhaps) John Hurt's Elephant Man.

Real equality may find it perfectly acceptable to portray physical characteristics not possessed by the performer. Political correctness may be a deadly brake on creativity.

IAN FLINTOFF
London SW6

Rethink UK sanctions on Iraq

Sir: Geoff Simons (Letters, "Iraqis killed by sanctions", 1 August) is correct in pointing out yet more gaps in New Labour's supposed ethical foreign policy, but his point needs further emphasis.

The UK is not merely a member of the Security Council which renews sanctions on Iraq every two months, but is also, alongside the US, the principal supporter of the sanctions regime. Britain therefore bears considerable responsibility for the deaths resulting from what is termed in polite political conversation "the containment of Iraq". The sanctions policy was barbaric in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, it is even more barbaric six years later, when it no longer appears to serve any purpose other than to maintain the status quo in the Middle East. Despite the attempts of Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, to make the sanctions policy look positive, killing is killing, it is not kindness. Seven years is too long, it is time to rethink the sanctions regime. SIMON FAULKNER
Campaign Against Repression and For Democratic Rights in Iraq, North West Manchester

Children who aren't ready to read

Sir: Thomas Sutcliffe and his son are locked in mutual bafflement: sooo can't read and Dad can't understand why not ("Tabloid", 7 August).

For years, I have been baffled over why the British force little children to read before they are reading-ready. Making the connection between spoken sounds and little squiggle symbols on paper is actually quite a complex process. There is plenty of well-documented evidence, acted on in the States and in Europe, that most children make this connection around the age of six or seven. That is when they start school, and they learn to read in weeks.

In the UK we start them off at barely five, some as young as four. We have confused nursery school with school. We mass-produce educational "failures" who need special education to help them out of their misery. It has become a British cottage industry to provide therapy for children who were taught formal lessons before their time.

Quinlan was right – wait till they are seven. Parents could play with their children and they could enjoy each other's company in those precious early years. What a thought! RUTH VECHT
Special Needs Teacher
London NW1

Pay per view

Sir: I have a suggestion on charging for, or, rather, the financing of, museums and galleries. Here in Italy, because I have reached ripe early middle age, I am entitled to enter the main galleries free of charge. Being as vain as any grande horizontale, and being paid decently for one of the most enjoyable jobs in the world, I do not exercise that right. (I have tried claiming to be under 18, but that never works.)

My suggestion is that (thinking of the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, or the Museo Capodimonte, Naples, for example) our museums charge, say, five pounds. Those claiming, on their own say-so, to be under 25, or over 65 should be admitted free. Anyone cheating to get in deserves the educational experience thus gained. Professor ARTHUR MARWICK
Royal Hotel, Naples

LETTER from THE EDITOR

Summer again, and the real editor escapes for a few days' peace – or so he thinks. Andrew Marr (Top Man, as we call him here) chose for some reason known only to himself to take his family off to Devon this week. Quite why he didn't go to France, where he can get silly numbers of francs for his pound, it's hard to say: that's certainly where the economics editor is going on holiday. Indeed, she had the foresight to buy her francs 10 days ago, when the pound was riding high. If she'd bought them yesterday she'd have been a lot worse off, which just goes to show that, on matters of personal finance, you should trust the economics editor of *The Independent*.

Still, on day two Andrew called in just to see how things were going to his absence.

"Fine," said I. "Doo' worry; just relax and enjoy yourself."

"Humph," he said. "Right now we're cooped up in the kitchen, with three children going stir crazy. It's chugging down outside, and anything but relaxing." Never mind, I assured him, the clouds will blow over, you'll have a lovely time.

Next morning the news editor bounded into our morning conference suggesting that we send a photographer down to the Devon coast, because there were flood warnings all over.

"Chucking it down, so I'm told," he declared cheerfully.

"Terrible pity for anyone on holiday there. Ob, isn't that where the editor's gone for his break? Perhaps we should ring him up and get him to send us a piece (chortle, chortle).

Now, it is true, and I am ashamed to admit it, that most good journalists do have a small vein of mischief in their bodies that would incline them to be mildly amused, in a schadenfreude kind of way, at the thought of the Top Man pacing irritably up and down his Devon cottage kitchen muttering imprecations at the weather.

But I firmly pointed out that that was not fair, and that we should be more civil and understanding about it.

So I didn't ask Andrew to write a piece – I just rang him to – well, you know, ask what the weather was like. "Humph."

Colin Hughes

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I hope it will soon become smart for the British sneerers to join the rest of the human race in loving Mr Bean – John Casey, Fellow of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge

I love sleeping. My greatest talent. I once fell asleep on stage, playing a statue of Queen Victoria – Nichola McAlpine, actress

The assumption is that because we are surrounded with a plethora of sexual messages in the media, people are enjoying healthy, happy, sexual relationships. That is not the case – Anne Weyman, of the Family Planning Association

They won't be like Alan Clark's diaries, but the fall of Heath and the rise of Thatcher should prove of interest. I think eight volumes should be about right – Lord St John of Fawsley, Tory peer, who is about to publish his memoirs

The English have a natural tendency to yobbliness. Ally this to collectivism, and you have a very nasty mixture – AN Wilson, author

Neil has taken to reading newspapers off the shelves in our local newsagent, but we always welcome copies of yesterday's from neighbours – Christine Hamilton announcing that her former Tory MP husband has been forced to cancel their newspaper subscriptions

Energy from London's waste

Sir: Mr Clement of the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) is right to draw attention to London's acute shortage of landfill (Letters, 7 August). But the solution he outlines assumes a conflict between recovering energy from waste and recycling that is illusory.

To move towards more sustainable waste management, in line with public aspiration and Government policy, we must pursue an integrated solution. Of course London should recycle more, though LPAC's new target (40 per cent) is heroic indeed. But a moratorium on new energy from waste plants in London will not itself recycle one more bottle or can. It will however result in the landfilling of millions more tonnes of waste, with the associated emissions of methane – a potent global warming gas.

A balanced approach such as that taken in other European capitals – far from calling for yet more delay – demands that much needed new energy from waste capacity is developed in parallel with major efforts to increase recycling and composting, so as to optimise value recovery overall. In this way wider environmental aims can also be met, such as greenhouse gas reduction and increased generation from renewable sources.

RAY PALIN
Director, Energy from Waste Association
London W2

Long odds for lottery gamblers

Sir: I never cease to be amazed at how ignorant the general public seem to be on the risks involved in gambling. David Spanier, in his Gambling column (7 August), refers to a leaflet now available in casinos entitled "The Risks of the Game", gaming's equivalent of a (financial) health warning.

I suggest that providing information and education about gambling should go further. It should be taught

Happiness is a quiet week in Ulster

One of the most common charges levelled at journalists covering northern Ireland is that they rarely focus on the positive, that they only want to report bloodshed and violence. Well, it has been sunny all week in Belfast. While the local news carried pictures of storms and severe flooding across the south of Ireland and England, these stopped dead at Ulster, leaving the people of the province basking in glorious sunshine.

There were other reasons to be cheerful: on Thursday the supergroup U2 announced that they were to play a massive gig in Belfast, a piece of news described by one newspaper as "one of the best the city has received in a very long time". "We're very excited about it. I don't think there's been a big outdoor concert in Belfast like this ever," said U2's manager Paul McGuinness. Compensation indeed for the news yesterday that the city had lost out on its bid to host the next Eurovision Song Contest.

There was jubilation in the world of business, when two large foreign companies announced investment worth almost £7m in Belfast and Newtownderry, with the promise of a significant number of new jobs. And then there was politics. Last week saw the dozing monster that is the talks process once again lumbering slowly and warily into life.

This was the week that Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams met with the Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, for the first time since before the previous ceasefire was broken in January 1996. Although the meeting was billed as preliminary and largely symbolic, it lasted well over its predicted time

The weather's been sunny in Northern Ireland, and despite some storm clouds on the horizon, a cautious optimism is in the air, says Jojo Moyes

span and ended with the promise of further talks. Significantly, perhaps, Dr Mowlam said afterwards that both sides had acknowledged "the need to change a bit".

There was widespread acclaim for an agreement by Ulster Unionist Ken Maginnis and Sinn Fein MP Martin McGuinness to take part in a face-to-face televised debate next week, the first such meeting since before the previous ceasefire. Media commentator Roy Greenslade described it on BBC Radio Ulster as "the thinness of bridges", but nevertheless a cause for optimism.

Predictably, perhaps, the Reverend Ian Paisley was critical of the decision, saying that unionists should not speak to the IRA until they were disarmed. But there was general support for the move, even among unionists, who said he should attend – even if only to ensure the Republican view did not go unchallenged. There

was also concern about heightening splits within the Unionist community – a worry not alleviated by Mr Paisley's charge that Mr Maginnis's decision signalled "the beginning of the end for the Ulster Unionist Party".

"We want Paisley in the talks," said one " lifelong unionist", summing herself outside Belfast's City Hall. "His mandate is to represent us. If he stays outside, we'll end up being left behind."

Indeed, Mr Paisley's insistence on staying outside the talks process appeared to be out of step with much popular feeling. The host of Radio Ulster's *Talkback* programme, a forum for all shades of caller opinion, noted on Thursday that the endless negative preoccupation with sectarianism could be dispiriting. He sounded positively resigned shortly afterwards when one caller chose to rant about marches. "Is there no way we can move this thing on?" he asked plaintively.

But there were causes for optimism, too. Tensions over today's planned Apprentice Boys parades were eased when, following a police edict, Orangemen agreed to re-route some of the smaller "feeder marches" that lead into the main parade around Londonderry's walls. Although disappointed by the police decision, Orange leaders stressed that they wanted the marches to pass off peacefully and agreed to stay within the confines of the law. By yesterday afternoon, their protests had been confined to the handing in of a letter, and, of course, a protest march.

The *Irish News* was among those to pick up on the good mood. It noted yesterday that after last month's scenes at the

Garvagh Road, it had seemed inevitable that the rest of the summer would witness "a long and bloody series of confrontations across northern Ireland". Instead, it said, an "unexpected outbreak of common sense" had hearkened those hoping for a more lasting peace.

And there were other, smaller moves towards conciliation. Earlier this week, Londonderry's SDLP Mayor, Martin Bradley, helped launch a pageant organised by Apprentice Boys' governor, Alan Simpson, at the organisation's headquarters. Mr Simpson spoke of his delight at welcoming the mayor, the first nationalist mayor ever to attend such an event, saying afterwards: "It is something that I never dreamt of – that we would have this type of thing here."

Martyn Lewis, the news-caster who once famously complained that there should be more good news, might have enjoyed himself here last week.

Even the potential loss of John Hume from the peace process to the Irish presidency was largely overshadowed by the possibilities for amusement afforded by the prospect of the singer Dana as his opponent. These may be small steps in one short week, but the knock-on effects are crucial. If the ceasefire, no matter how precarious, has one important consequence, it is in helping rebuild the confidence of Ulster's business and industrial base. Belfast suffers some of the worst unemployment in Europe, with all the resulting economic and social problems, and no one would dispute the need for further investment.

Colin Anderson, president of Northern Ireland's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which represents more than 3,000 businesses, said yesterday that that with this in mind, the business community had viewed the week's events with "cautious optimism". "We have not experienced the euphoria

that occasioned the last ceasefire so we want to wait and see ... but we're hopeful that it's here to stay," he said.

Mr Anderson pointed out that business can be an important unifying influence. The Chamber of Commerce, he said, has been meeting with political leaders in an attempt to push the province's economy further up the political agenda.

A key factor in ensuring a lasting peace was to put money in people's pockets: "Then they see life isn't so bad, and they're not as likely to get involved in violent activities."

As he spoke, Economy Minister Adam Ingram was in the United States accompanied by Ulster Unionist Jeffrey Donaldson and the SDLP's Mark Durkan in a joint attempt to woo foreign investors. Mr Anderson said that despite the end of the previous ceasefire, the underlying trend for northern Ireland was still one of growth. This appeared to be borne out by a stroll around the

city centre, which was yesterday hustling with shoppers.

"The one thing that builds people's confidence is the lack of bombs," said a spokeswoman for the group Families Against Intimidation. "People like to know they can come into the city centre and feel safe."

There are other, perhaps subconscious, factors that contribute to that confidence: the unsettling noise of overhead surveillance forces helicopters, so often omnipresent, was absent. And in an hour, only one armoured vehicle passed by.

One of the things least often reported about Belfast is its beauty and friendliness. The south of the city is rarely affected by trouble, and much of the local countryside is stunning. Mr Anderson describes it as "the best kept secret in Europe". Should the ceasefire continue, there is little to stop it becoming a major tourist destination.

Tourism is often the litmus paper of confidence in the

province. Yesterday a survey of 89 of Belfast's hoteliers revealed that 79 per cent believed the success of the peace process was the most crucial factor in developing their business. Their confidence is not yet widespread, however. Equal numbers (27 per cent) described themselves as pessimistic about the future as said they were optimistic. This is unsurprising. Even the uninitiated can appreciate that a week is a long time in Ulster politics, and for all the good signs during the last week, there was plenty that could be put forward to dampen any premature high spirits.

Yesterday morning, the residents of Newtownbutler, the site of a proposed march by the loyalist Royal Black Preceptory today, were calling on "nationalists throughout Ireland to come along and support the beleaguered residents in their time of need", if attempts were made to force the march through. They were planning to rally last night at the village RUC station. The *Belfast Telegraph* noted that there was "the prospect of serious trouble unless the situation can be defused".

The same morning, 1,000 Protestants marched through Londonderry, protesting about their "right to march". Both had the potential to heighten tensions over the weekend. The Parades Commission was said to be keeping a close watch. Meanwhile, police noted that levels of so-called punishment attacks were still high. Claims from the family of a shooting victim that the gunman had described themselves as Republicans also tempered some of the optimism that the police had allowed themselves since the latest ceasefire was announced.

In what appeared to be a deliberate attempt at provocation, two hoax devices were delivered to the offices of Unionist councillors last week. An Orange hall outside Newry was damaged in an arson attack. And yesterday homes were evacuated when a hoax bomb was detonated in Strabane, and another incendiary device was defused in South Belfast. It was, said one RUC source, much too early to draw any conclusions about the ceasefire.

A few clouds were gathering overhead yesterday evening, signifying a possible end to the balmy weather. But across the city, people in Belfast appeared to be looking for the good. "Cautious optimism" was still in place that the weekend's planned parades would pass without violence, prompting the question: could one week's good news be a building block for the province's future?



Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

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Self-help books are comedy. It's not that they don't do their job. Lots of normal people take secret delight in seeing the words, "You're all right, really," in print. If it's in print, it must be true.

This scares me. I'm suspicious of books like *The Celestine Prophecy*, a wonky bestseller which makes you want to ask the author, "What colour is the sky in your world?" Merely insisting that *Life is Beautiful* turns self-help into the fuzzy-thinker's crutch, tossed aside when you get better.

Hard-core self-help, however, is honourable. The best come with aggressive titles like *Toilet Training Your Inner Child, I'm Okay, You're Going To Hell and Losing Weight By Eating Less And Exercising More*. That's why I'm ripping through *Emotional Blackmail* by Dr Susan Forward with Donna Frazier (Bantam Press, £15.99). The masterful copywriting on its dustjacket implores, "Do [important people in your life] shower you with approval when you give it to them and take it away when you don't?"

Soon you're weeping, "Yes! Yes!" and leaning against the cash till, book and credit card in hand. Although it baits browsers with the same dirty tricks that *Cosmopolitan* (front cover lines on the outside, striking far mediocrity on the inside), *EB* delivers the goods. It's touchy-feely American analysis-a-like.

The doctor's favourite example of a manipulative phrase is, "Gee, I wish

someone would open the window," rather than, "Could you please open the window?"

Nice try. In my house, whining works best. "I'm dying here. Did you have an affair with a double-glazing salesman or is this a terrarium? When did you move the sofa and the TV into the oven?"

Dr Forward is no slouch. She's authored two best-selling milestones in self-help – *Toilet Training Your Inner Child, I'm Okay, You're Going To Hell and Losing Weight By Eating Less And Exercising More*. That's why I'm ripping through *Emotional Blackmail* by Dr Susan Forward with Donna Frazier (Bantam Press, £15.99). The masterful copywriting on its dustjacket implores, "Do [important people in your life]

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The doctor's favourite example of a manipulative phrase is, "Gee, I wish

actually apologising for nothing.

Concerning "the silent treatment", her last advice is to "Let some things slide". This reminds me of my *French for Travellers* phrase book which had "STOP OR I'LL SCREAM" in phonetic French. With *Emotional Blackmail*, thousands of shock-up people will also be feverishly thumbing its pages, trying to find the right thing to say at the right time. My advice? Let everything slide – including your personal hygiene, housework and coming home at night. That's what I think.

Somebody said that Stella Tennant was a supermodel for two very good reasons other than being thin and beautiful. Both of her names are names of lager. Hence, if my mother had called me Bud, Miller, Coors or Rolling Rock, I too would be a supermodel who had to beat men off with a bat.

We are jealous of beauty. We women hate other women who have that infallible oomph. In the original script for the movie *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, the heroine is described as "effortlessly beautiful". No matter what she does, she's gorgeous. This irked me so much, I couldn't finish the script. Excuse me? Effortless beauty? Never in anyone over the age of 12.

Yet here is Elizabeth Hurley doing just that. I hate to say it but she is marvellous in the new Paté film, *Austin Powers – International Man Of Mystery*. Released in September, this is the best

comedy I've seen since *Airplane!* Liz plays the sex bomb Bond girl with M Appeal to Mike Myers' Austin Powers. He's a cryogenically frozen secret agent/photographer/rock star from the Sixties, thawed out to battle Dr Evil (also played by Myers).

It's fast company for Liz but she lets the plethora of breast jokes do the work for her. I'll forgive the massively airbrushed Estée Lauder commercials and her overblown, blowfish lips. In *Austin Powers*, she is, if not redeemed, made.

I hate her.

I hated her even more when she was going on recently about her cursed "boy's bum". In her youth, she had to stuff her jeans with tissues to get "a curve". This girl loves fry-ups. Bacon sandwiches are her best friends, next to Hollywood bigwigs. This is a gorgeous woman who wears nothing but jeans and T-shirts around the house and, famously, on bra.

Liz, can you say "Cooper's Droop" five times fast? Who repealed the law of gravity around your chest?

The truth is, Liz Hurley is playing at effortless beauty. Just wait until her chain smoking catches up with her. She'll look like a rucksack with eyes.

Or maybe not. In *Scalpel*, er, Los Angeles, California, plastic surgery is a new religion. A talented surgeon can wipe away all traces of sin from your skin. You'll look and feel years younger. And, like those old medieval indulgences, it'll only cost a lot.



IMAGE OF THE WEEK A scene of complete serenity. Or is it? The rolling hills and cosy little farmhouses of Dovedale in Derbyshire belie the fact that more tourists in pursuit of peace and quiet will visit this beauty spot this year than ever. Photograph by Brian Harris at 1/500th at f5.6 on 300mm using 160 ASA film. For a copy of this picture, for £15, phone 0171 293 2534



thelongweekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 9 AUGUST 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

Answers to the meaning of creation

Five leading writers from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds, including Fay Weldon, right, answer questions of faith in a series of Prom interval talks

Fay Weldon: I see God as the Author of the Universe ... God the writer. "In the beginning was the word ..." See it literally. The word on the page, the idea confined and controllable, shared by our common understanding ... To those who are creative, creation seems as nothing. You make something where nothing was before: easy peasy. You think it up. The greater the gap between nothing and that something is how you judge the quality of creation. A good book floats free, a bad book bounces along on the ground. The gap between a world without Shakespeare's plays and the world with them is pretty big. The gap between non-existence and the entire universe. God's doing, is of course overwhelming."

Howard Jacobson: There is a clown, sacred to the Sioux Indian people, whose business it is to be his own contradiction, his own upside-down shadow, a refutation of all reason, a man who says the opposite to what he means, and does the opposite to what it is usual and practicable to do. Like all clowns he is divided down the middle, the hair on the right side of his head shaved, the hair on the left hanging long. He is called a *heyoka*, or contrary clown.

But in order to perform in a *heyoka* ceremony it is not enough merely to wish to do so. In order to joke, you need to have dreamed; in order to cause laughter you need to have experienced terror. If you want to be a Sioux comedian, you have first to be a visionary. A dog is killed, its neck broken, its carcass offered to the thunder gods before being flung into boiling water. While the dog boils the clowns perform their tricks, carrying bows that are too crooked to fly. They shiver in the

heat. They pretend to drown in shallow water. They make as if to swim in mud. They say the opposite of what they mean. Everybody laughing, everybody trying to get a piece of the dog flesh. Mirth and ferocity interchangeable.

When the ceremony was over, everybody felt a great deal better, for it had been a day of fun. They were better able now to see the greatness of the world, the wideness of the sacred day, the colours of the earth, and to set these in their minds. Does art have any higher aim than that? Does religion? To revivify the senses, to reconfirm belief in the sacredness of existence, to restore glory to the earth ... and to set these wonders in the mind of all who behold them.

Harif Kureishi: Fundamentalism provides security. For the fundamentalist, as for all reactionaries, everything has been decided. Truth has been agreed and nothing must change. For serene liberals, on the other hand, the consolations of knowing seem less satisfying than the pleasures of puzzlement, and of wanting to discover for oneself. But the feeling that one cannot know everything, that

there will always be maddening and live questions about who one is and how it is possible to make a life with other people who don't accept one, can be devastating. Perhaps it is only so long that one can live with that kind of puzzlement. Rationalists have always underestimated the need people have for belief. Enlightenment values don't provide spiritual comfort or community or solidarity. Islam could do this in a country that was supposed to be home but which could, from day to day, seem alien.

Muslim fundamentalism has always seemed to me to be profoundly wrong, overly restrictive and frequently cruel. But there are reasons for its revival that are comprehensible. It is that this has made me want to look at it not only in terms of ideas, but in stories, in character, in terms of what people do ... Perhaps the greatest book of all, and certainly one of the most pleasurable, *The One Thousand and One Nights*, is written in Arabic. This creativity, the making of something which didn't exist before, the vigour and stretch of a living imagination, is a human affirmation of another kind, and a necessary and important form of



self-examination. Without it our humanity is diminished.

Karen Armstrong: We all know the power of poetry. The sound, rhythm and allusive connotations of the words chosen by a poet can take language into a new dimension: poetic language can enter us deeply, reaching a level that is more fundamental than the cerebral; it can lift us momentarily beyond ourselves. Theology should work in the same way. It cannot be a mere statement of fact; it must touch us emotionally and give us intimations of transcendence. The first Muslims were often converted not so much by the message of the Koran as by the extraordinary beauty of the text, which cannot come across in an English translation. Thus Omar had been fiercely critical of Mohammed until he heard the Koran recited aloud. The poetry reached through his reserves of intellectual resistance to a core of receptivity that he had been unaware of. We seem to have lost this sense of scripture and God-talk and have become obsessed with the historicity, nationality and literal meaning of theology. As our Western modernity has spread to other parts of the globe, Jews, and a necessary and important form of

Christians and Muslims have all become worried about the integrity of their scriptures in a new way. Unless and until we recover a sense of the language of religion as dogmatic, in the Greek sense, our view of religious truth will be impoverished and we will deny ourselves an important means of discovering that transcendence which human beings are compelled to seek.

Michèle Roberts: The old mother goddesses, officially cast out by the masculine religion of Christianity with its drama of Father and Son, survived in pagan practices, in the folklore and heresies that have always flourished at the fringes. The female body, so feared and repressed, returns to haunt and dazzle us in the shapes of visionaries and visions – the Virgin Mary, apparently increasingly making herself visible all over the world in our own day, seems to represent, to those who see her or are moved by reports of her presence, Goddess herself. God is presented as female form.

There is clearly a tremendous hunger among people to have bodily experiences of God: why else do miraculous statues bleed and weep? Here are those physical processes shunned by the Churches – menstruation, lactation – oewly made numinous and holy. The reality of these miraculous events and visions is a psychic one. People produce and project their own images, individually and communally. God is worshipped through images of the physical. God is found through images of the physical. God is not any longer simply Him Up There. God has become part of us.

'Flesh Made Word' can be heard during the Proms tomorrow on BBC Radio 3.

INSIDE

Julia Kaminski meets Geraldine James

Travel & outdoors

Point of views: the Ardnamurchan Peninsula 9
Outing to Edinburgh 10
Painswick's perfect post office 11
Heidelberg remembered 13



Far East 14, 15
Gardening 16

PLUS

Games, crossword 2
Arts, reviews 485
Books 6, 7, 8
All consuming 18-20
Motoring 21
Money, property 23-26
TV, radio reviews 27
Today's TV Back page



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A home-made stealth bomber – the ideal accessory on a summer day, writes George Buchanan

We go kite flying in the summer. The weather is nearly always perfect: blustery winds, scudding clouds, squalls of horizontal rain – the very thing for soaring birds and kite flyers. Now and again we make a kite. Of course one can buy a kite but we prefer to make our own. The ones we make are large, slow and heavy, and resemble monstrous stealths sliding across the sky. In strong winds they are difficult to fly, prone to spectacular crashes and limb wrenching surges of power. In these conditions they might, at best, last a few days, and survive a dozen nosedives and cartwheels, before the sticks splinter, the seams tear, and the joints spring loose.

Cattle and walkers on the Common may have seen our latest monster flying high. You can't buy a Flying Manta but this is how to make one. It shouldn't take more than an hour.

Paradoxically, because the materials are so heavy, it has to be quite large to fly. Twelve and a half square foot of wing area is about the minimum viable size for summer stealths.

For the wing fabric you will need a scrap of damp-proof membrane (which you can buy from a builders' merchant), four long bamboo bean sticks, a roll of parcel tape, a roll of carpet tape (the reinforced kind), a key ring and a wire coat hanger. To cut and twist the wire you will want a pair of pliers, and unless you have teeth like a ferret, you will need a knife to cut through the tape. An unexpected ingredient is the spring from a derelict clothes peg.

Using the wire from the coat hanger, fashion the twisted inserts illustrated (fig 1). Fit them in the wide end of each stick; the Z shaped one goes into the centre stick, and the two loops fit in the ends of the outer sticks. Bind some parcel tape round the ends to prevent them splitting, and secure the inserts by knotting string to them and taping the ends of the string to the bamboo.

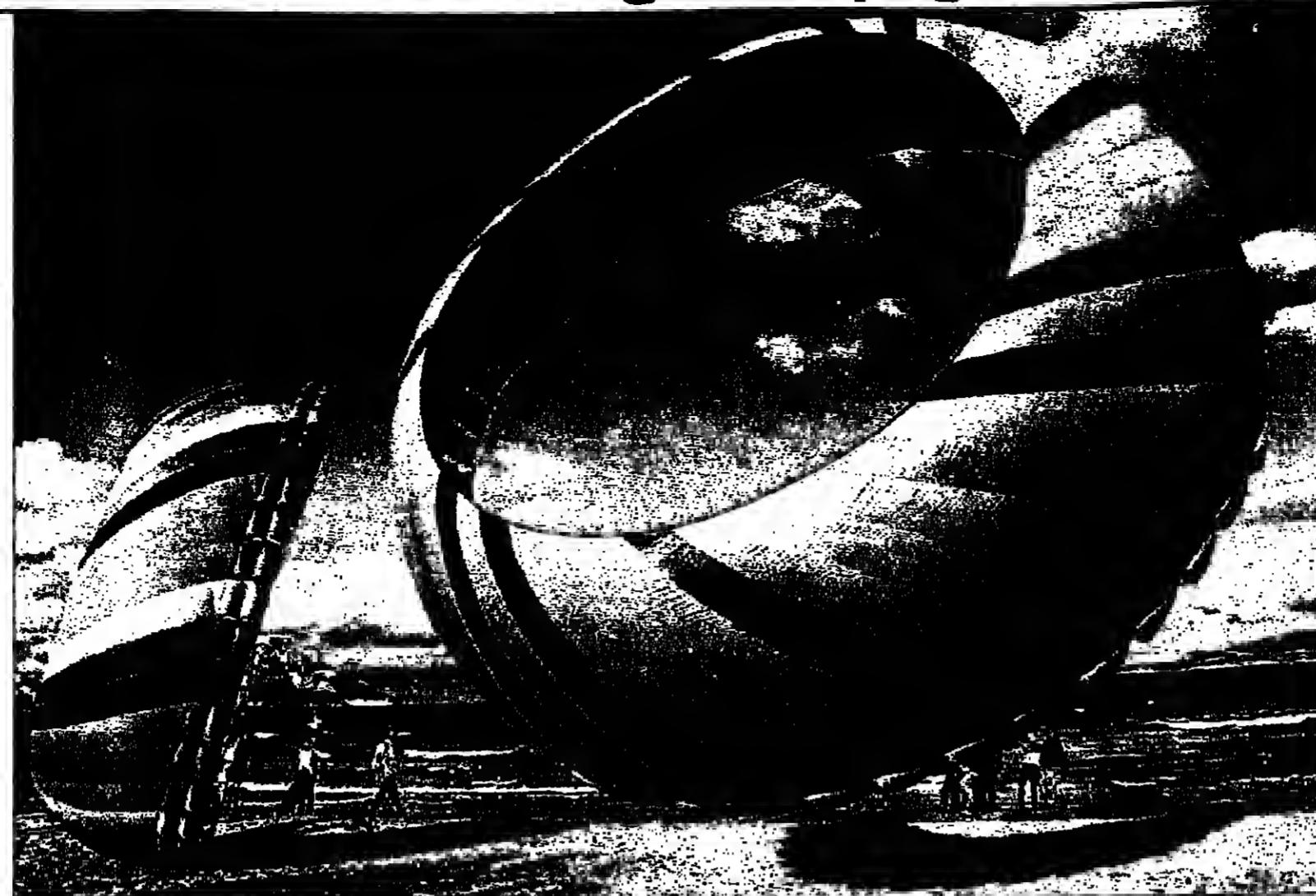
Fit the three sticks together. The Z-shaped wire is inserted through the wire loops in the outer two sticks, and secures them. Lay the sticks in position on top of the plastic sheet and cut the sheet to size (fig 2). Tape the edges of the sheet to the two outside sticks. Use the carpet tape at the point, at the end of each stick, and at one or two intermediate stations between.

Make the anchorage wires for the cross stick (fig 3), and tape them to the side sticks, equidistant from the point. When the kite is laid flat, the cross stick should be about two inches short of a fit. In the air, the wings sweep upwards and hold the stick in position.

Now fit the harness strings. These comprise a centre loop which is fastened to the point, and runs to the very end of the centre stick, and one intermediate string, that passes through the wing and is tied to the centre stick, more or less at its centre.

Before fastening the rear end of the centre loop, thread the string through the barrel of the clothes peg spring. I have illustrated a round turn and two half hitches which is suitable for tying the ends of the string.

Knot the intermediate string to the middle of the centre stick, and pull it



Gain altitude with attitude

tight. Make a small incision in the wing, and slip the string through. With the kite upside down on the floor, pull the centre loop taut, and fasten the intermediate string to the barrel of the spring which (you will notice) slides freely along the centre loop. This gives you the adjustment facility you need to control lift.

The kite string is fastened to the barrel of the spring, and its position on the centre loop determines lift. This is found by experimentation. Too far back and the kite lurches backwards.

too far forwards, and there is insufficient lift. To secure the spring, take a single hitch round one of its arms as illustrated (fig 6). Fix a sack or a substantial key ring on the spring as a fixing point for the kite string.

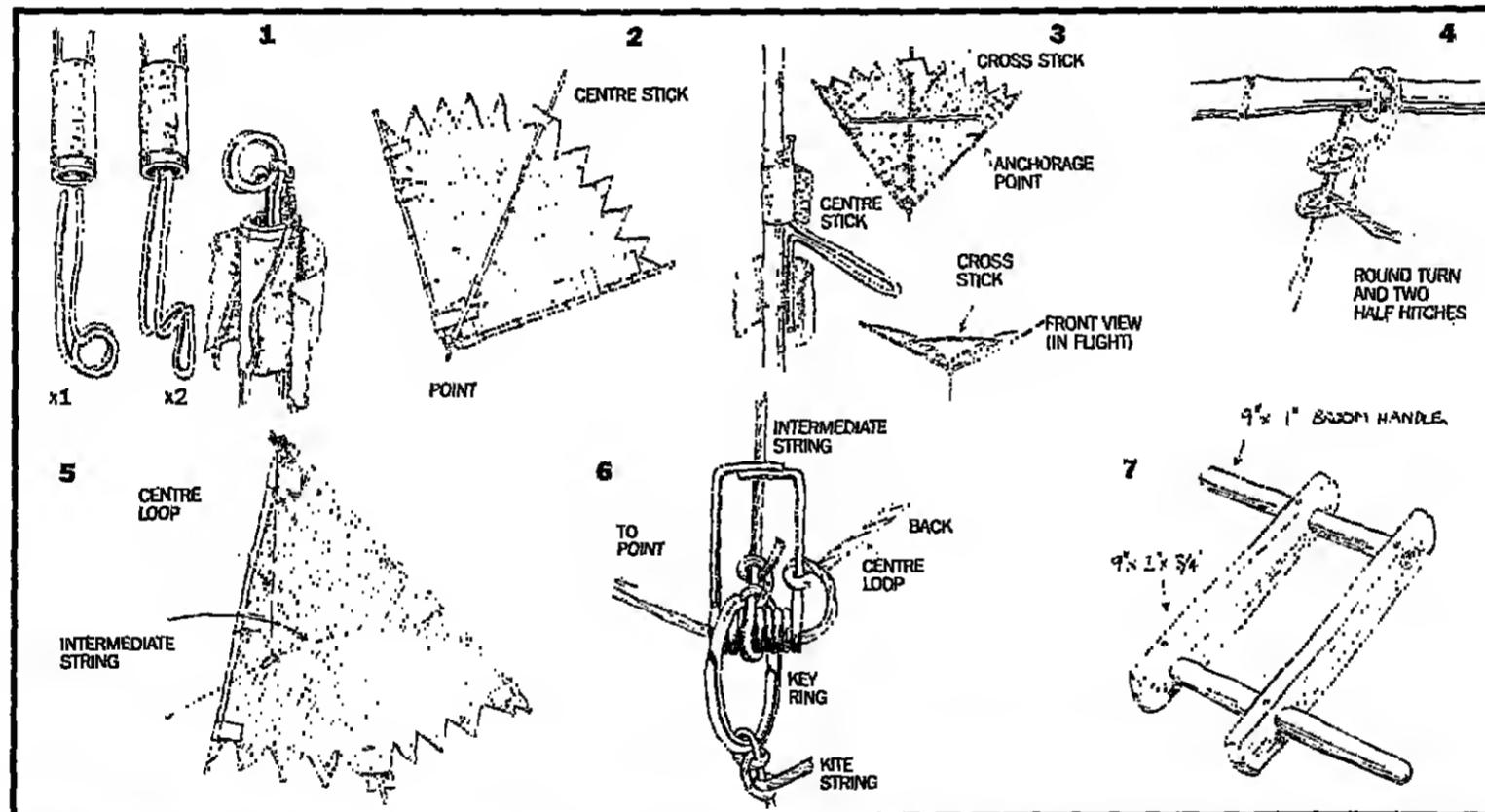
The tail should be long, and have considerable windage; its drag helps keep the kite head to wind. Make the tail from offcuts of the plastic sheet, and make it longer than you think necessary. Cut the tail to length when you first fly the kite: if it doesn't lift, snip off a few feet.

Secure all the side seams with parcel tape. At close quarters it looks very amateurish, but at 20,000 feet it doesn't notice.

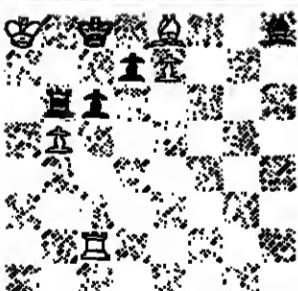
I made the winder from two 9-inch lengths of 2 x 3/4 inch pine, and two 9-inch lengths of broom handle. (fig 9). You will need tough string to hold this kite: ordinary kite thread will snap. Polypropylene baling twine or garden string is ideal.

Fly the kite in a wide open space, miles away from power cables, and thunder clouds. If Defenders and

Troopers, and four wheel drive Subarus trundle across the turf to get a clearer view, wave them away. Gentle as a lamb in soft winds, in rough weather the Manta is an unpredictable and short tempered beast, prone to violent changes of altitude. It might take a sudden dislike to them, and dent their lids. And grapple tight to any child weighing less than 11 stone to make sure they don't soar skywards. In an emergency, let go the string; given its freedom, our Manta tumbles gently to earth.



Chess William Hartston

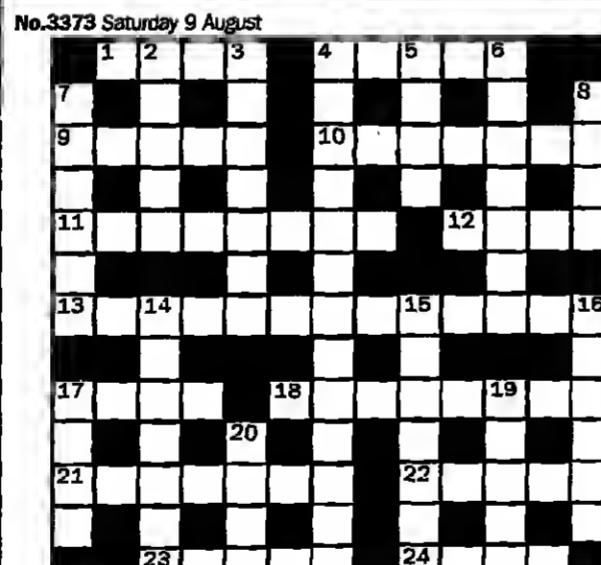


The endgame study composer Genrich Kasparian, who died last year, was one of the strongest players of all problemists. (Many very strong players have composed the occasional fine problem, but few top-class problemists have had much of a playing career.) Perhaps this is why so many of his compositions have that light touch that appeals to players as well as purists. The position above is a good example. It is White to play and win.

At first glance, it looks simple: get the bishop out of the way and promote the pawn to a queen next move. But things are not so simple.

After the natural 1.Bg6 (or 1.Bh5) Black plays 1...Rb6+ 2.Ka7 Bd4+. Now 3.b6 is forced, when 3...Bxb6+ 4.Ka6 looks, and is good for White. But Black plays instead 3...Rxb6+ and after 4.e8Q+ Kc7 the threat of Rb8+ guarantees Black a draw. The white queen has no good square from which to give check.

Concise crossword



Solutions to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Chateau, 5 Wring (Shattering), 8 Radio, 9 Jericho, 10 Listens, 11 Idyll, 12 Bleach, 14 Agreed, 17 Copy, 19 Mongrel, 22 Morocco, 23 Views, 24 Sisal, 25 Holster. DOWN: 1 Catol, 2 Artist, 3 Evoke, 4 Unjust, 5 Working, 6 Itchy, 7 Growled, 12 Becomes, 13 Council, 15 Earnest, 16 Smooth, 18 Yards, 20 Novel, 21 Loser.

Bridge Alan Hiron

East-West game; dealer South
North
♦J 5
♥K 5 2
♦6 4 2
♦A Q 10 7 6
West
♦K 7 4
♦Q J 9 8 7 6
♦K 9 5
♦3
South
♦A Q
♦A 10 4
♦A Q 10
♦J 9 8 5 2

raised his partner to game instead of doubling and taking a substantial penalty.

West led ♦Q against 3NT and, not wanting to give East the lead if it could possibly be avoided, declarer won in dummy and played the ace and another club, rejecting the finesse. He did not mind West getting in and now had the extra chance of dropping the king of clubs. East won the second club, however, and switched to spades. The finesse lost, West cleared the suit, and now South could not come to more than eight tricks.

South was quite right to be apprehensive of a spade lead from East, but he missed a neat play. It is perfectly all right – indeed, a good idea – to cash the ace of clubs, but when the king does not fall, declarer should finesse the queen of diamonds.

South opened One No-trump (16-18 points) and West overcalled with Two Hearts. He had a lucky escape when North

Perplexity

Literary confusion:

Ghastly fat whores jog nasty hero

We are looking for the name of a famous author and the title of his or her perhaps most celebrated work. And all you have to do is find them in unjumble the letters in the above sentence.

Lest we mislead, we should like to make it clear that apart from having the same letters, there is no intended connection between the above sentence and the answer and the meaning of the sentence itself.

A prize of the *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary* will be awarded to the sender of the first correct answer we open on 21 August. Answers to: Perplexity, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

Answers and the winner's name of the Perplexity competition that appeared on 26 July are held over until next week.

Games people play

Pandora Melly talks to the man who beat the man who was the father of the South London ping-pong champion.

Craigie Aitchison RA, 70, painter

I used to play ping-pong in the nursery at home with my brother, and if we did anything wrong during the day, we weren't allowed to play. If you dropped your napkin, that was just one of the things that mattered, or if you didn't eat the fat at lunch. It wasn't my parents, it was the people who looked after us. The worst one was the governess.

Ping-pong was taken very seriously. I expect I usually lost, because I remember banging the table in a temper. Later I played with the painter Euan Uglow. We used to play the best of three, but if Euan lost, he made me play the best of five, so there were huge rows and banging the table. I liked playing with Euan, because he hated losing.

I was always told that I had a cheat's serve, because you're meant to do it sideways. It doesn't say so in the rules, but I was accused of serving in a cheating way and there were rows over that. I'd drop the ball on the table, and hit it across. Are you meant to have it up in the air or something first?

My claim to fame in this area is that I beat the father of the South London ping-pong champion. I never let Euan forget that. It doesn't mean a thing really, because the father was doing the decorating here. I played him and beat him, but it wasn't like beating the South London champion.

I like ping-pong because it's not at all sporty and you don't have to be dressed up for it. Unfortunately I no longer have the table. I took it to Italy, and we had it outside, but it got all wet and fell to bits. I've always meant to get another one.

Premonitions

On Paul McKenna's appalling *Paranormal World* on television the other week, they showed a chap in Nevada who has been doing research into precognition. Subjects are wired up to a device that gauges emotional reaction by measuring electrical activity in the skin, then they are shown randomly selected photographs, some of which are idyllic and pastoral and the others are so filthy that they had to blot out the rude bits on our screens. Anyway, what the results claim to show is that subjects reacted to the emotionally charged pictures even before they had been selected. The experiments were cited as evidence of precognition.

This, of course, merely adds a human dimension to the celebrated work of the parapsychologist R L Morris who, in 1967, showed that if you put three goldfish in a tank, then use a random number generator to decide which one to fish out, there is a tendency for the about-to-be-caught goldfish to swim about a bit more frantically before its number comes up.

We mention all this only because of some work we have been doing in our newspaper database. Since the murder of Gianni Versace, we have been monitoring occurrences in the press of the word 'frock'. We felt that it had come into relative prominence since his death, and were wondering whether this was purely temporary or the start of a new linguistic vogue. Since we needed a base level for purposes of comparison, we monitored the occurrences of 'frock' over each of the past few months, here are the monthly totals since December.

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Frock	124	126	104	102	90	135	167

Throughout 1996, frock had been running at about 120 a month, and as these figures show, that rate was maintained in January. But the next three months showed a marked decline, followed by sudden and dramatic rises in May and June. The June 1997 figure is, in fact, the highest ever recorded for a calendar month. And if we were to plot these figures on a graph, it would look just like the readout from the device used on the Paul McKenna show. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that precognition is an exact science – with hindsight.

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Backgammon Chris Bray

Those seeking to study the history of backgammon are confronted with a difficult problem. There is no definitive history of the game, which can trace its antecedents back some 5,000 years. The very first backgammon book of the modern era, appropriately entitled *The Backgammon Book* by Jacoby & Crawford (ISBN 0-14046260-0) does have a brief but excellent history of the game as its first section. The other useful reference book is H J R Murray's *A History of Board Games other than Chess* which notes that the first recorded use of the word backgammon was in 1645.

The Backgammon Book traces the game from its murky origins in Mesopotamia, through the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Greeks – the tedium of the siege of Troy was lightened by playing an early form of the game – and the Romans. *The Emperor Claudius* is said to have written a book on the game!

The game's route into Europe is obscured by time although the Roman Empire obviously played some part. It is mentioned in old English glossaries of the eighth and ninth centuries but its great popularity apparently dates from the Crusades whereafter it became known as Tables. A backgammon board was found on the wreck of the Mary Rose.

Different versions of the game can still be found around the world varying from the US Navy's Acey-Deucey to Greece's Tavli. The modern version of the game gained new life and immense popularity in the 1920s when some enterprising gamesmen in one of the New York clubs came up with the idea of the doubling cube. The first laws of the game were drafted in 1931 at the New York Racquet & Tennis Club.

The Backgammon Book also contains some excellent photographs and prints of early artefacts and boards and more recent paintings from European archives. Like many backgammon books of the early 1970s the book is currently out of print but it is well worth checking your local second-hand bookshop for a copy, and you can occasionally find a copy in a public library.

On a more modern note, Malcolm Peir of Chess & Bridge Ltd, informs me that they now stock all versions of *Jellyfish* and are willing to give demonstrations or to send a demo disk free of charge to anyone who requests it. They can be contacted at 369 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR. Tel: 0171-388-2404.

For the weather, traffic reports, the sky at night, and Damien Hirst's cartoon sage of artistic angst ... TURN TO PAGE 27

100 in 150

Late bloomer



Julia
Kaminski
talks to
**GERALDINE
JAMES**

Rose strides towards me along the street on impossibly long, black-stockinged legs. At least, it looks like Rose, the reformed hooker in *Band of Gold* — shaggy curls, incandescent skirt, spiky heels — but the woman who offers me a makeshift seat on the pavement ("In the shade, if you don't mind, I can't go near the sun") sounds rather more like Sarah Layton, the awfully nice colonel's daughter in *Jewel in the Crown*. In fact, Geraldine James is neither. Nice Sarah nor Flawed Rose, although she can identify with both. "It's a very short step from Rose to me," she explains over lunch later. "In fact, sometimes I think there's no step at all."

James, in Manchester to film an autumn sequel to the Bradford prostitutes' drama *Band of Gold*, is taller and skinnier than you'd expect, especially if you're watching the current repeats of *Jewel*, set in 1940s India, in which her Sarah is a solidly built, plain girl with a strong line in very proper dresses and suppressed sexuality.

"When we were filming *Jewel*, in the mid-Eighties, it was only 40 years after the setting of the series, and I could sort of feel Sarah across the time gap. So much had happened to women, and here we all were, going 'Yes, Sarah Layton, hey, we're with you-o-o', whereas at the time she felt completely isolated, mad, and wrong, and had, but she couldn't speak up for herself because she was in that world that said 'Tup! Not a word'. You're female, you don't question things. They think she's being difficult if she doesn't smile and want to play tennis every afternoon."

If there's one thing that James does not share with Sarah Layton, it is diffidence. She talks 20 to the dozen, a breathless stream, without full-stops or commas. "Sarah has flashes of humour, but most of the time that's completely repressed, and it was fascinating to play it. When I saw the repeats, I was startled — I didn't remember that I was so upright and anal retentive, but I think I based it on Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter*."

Did she look like Sarah then? "She was meant to be spectacularly plain, but I think the make-up person went a little far!"

India, where she also filmed *Gandhi*, was a rich experience for James. The people were "absolutely fantastic".

"One waiter in the hotel where we were staying took us all to his mum's for dinner one night. We went to weddings. We went to Simla, which is this extraordinary place up in the mountains, very British, with the Gaiety Theatre or something like that with all these photos from the Forties of these English people doing plays as if they'd been in Woking."

"But I was very frightened, too," she recalls. "I was very insecure as an actress. There was Sarah in her time, with me, Geraldine, in the Eighties, going 'You're all right', but I was thinking 'I can't do this, I'm no good, I'm hopeless'. Now, 15 years later, I wish I'd had that extra iota of confidence that I now have, so I could have gone. 'I can play this part'."

This is a recurring theme: her lack of faith in herself, even now at 46. Why did she continue to act if, even in her thirties, she felt she couldn't do it?

"But I still think I can't do it," she wails. "The only reason I think it less — and this is absolutely, genuinely true — is I'm doing it and I now have a backlog of work. I can feel a little quieter in my soul. And it also matters less than when I was in my thirties. And nobody can tell me I'm not going to be an actress, because I have been an actress. I can go before my maker and say 'I was an actor,' — this in an emphatic voice, presumably one kept specially for addressing one's maker — 'and I can play a few videos'."

"I have taken risks in my life, like playing Rose. I honestly thought when that series came out that I would be laughed out of the country."

Fears that she was miscast dogged her at the beginning, in the same way that Sarah had felt out of place in the world of the Raj.

"I thought people would go 'This is ridiculous, this girl is middle-class, how can she possibly play this creature, who does she think she is? I mean, listen to her!'" Scorn drips from these words convincingly. "I honestly thought people would think that, and instead they went 'Yeah, gosh,' and so a little bit of me went 'Phew! I've got away with it again!'" Surely she doesn't feel like this every time? "I do, I think. This time I won't be able to do it, this time I'm going to miss the diving board and go off in the shallow end and there won't be any water in it anyway. I'm going to completely land on my face!"

To James, the crucial thing about *Band of Gold* is that it must be believable, and must not



glamorise prostitution. The first series divided police opinion in the Bradford area, where it is set, between those who felt it increased public awareness, and those who felt it encouraged kerb-crawling and possibly even tempted young women into prostitution, believing it to be glamorous.

"This programme must be authentic. It isn't *Dynasty*, it's about life on the streets, and if people can see it and believe us and think 'That's what these women are like,' they may change their attitudes. Many people dismiss and loathe prostitutes, they think they're the scum of the earth. If we can say they're human beings, and understand what may have led them towards this life and be a little less judgemental; and please can

we also talk about the gentlemen who need to use these women's services..."

"It has completely changed my own views. I think in some awful way I had a romanticised view of it. I thought it would be easier to play than it is. Within about a week we were wearing these costumes — on, my bit was my legs and my tits [goodness me, that Nice Sarah would never say 'tits'], so they had to be fairly well exposed, and that's fine when you're acting, but when they go 'Lunch!' you're still exhibiting yourself and we found that you just get looked at. That was very startling, to realise what it would be like, for me," she emphasises, "not to be in control of how I present myself."

Researching Rose brought James into contact with prostitutes in Bradford's Lumb Lane red-light area where she heard all the gruesome details of life on the streets.

"We see them at home making a cup of tea and saying 'Christ, it's tough out there' and we realise what it would be like to work in those clothes, in winter, getting into hot cars for 10 minutes and getting thrown out again having made 10 quid, stuffing it into your bra and wandering on to the next street corner. Somebody turns up who is deeply repellent physically, and smells, and wants you to do appalling things, and you're so cold you do it. It ain't a glamorous life by any means."

"You are completely vulnerable; if he whips a

Geraldine James: "I honestly thought when *Band of Gold* came out that I would be laughed out of the country"

PHOTOGRAPH: ROA BODMAN / NTM

knife out... no wonder the girls fear for their lives. They have such low self-esteem. In my experience, almost all of these women have been abused. So they already think of themselves as complete rubbish. The fact that they go off with a man who starts hitting them around somehow fits in with their lives."

James is most scathing of the pimps who lure young schoolgirls into the game. Having a 12-year-old daughter, Eleanor, brings it sharply into focus for her. "That whole pimp thing is so disgusting. They'll seduce very young girls literally by giving them sweets. Buying them nice clothes. Encouraging them, developing their sexuality when they're too young."

Did it strike a chord when her character Rose discovered, in the second series, that her estranged daughter was a hooker? "I could imagine what it was like for Rose. But I don't relate it to Eleanor very much. I did get very alarmed on one location when we were filming outside a junior school, and somebody said 'This is where pimps will identify their likely candidates, and start working on them.' Now if they're strong, secure children with loving families, then they're not going to be taken in by that — I hope."

Does Eleanor feel insecure, with her mother away so often? "Well, it does get tougher for her as she gets older, because she's more aware. When she was a baby, I didn't work until she was about 15 months old, and by the time I went back to work I was going up the wall. I realised, there's a hit of me that is nourished by acting, which is kept at bay when I'm at home being a mum. It's phenomenal to do both, but I can't choose."

The actress in James was born at boarding school in Berkshire, where she felt miscast. "Very early on there were the girls who were good at singing, at the arts, or mathematics or languages, and I wasn't good at anything. I didn't shine. So I became the clown in order to have an identity and at the age of 13 they put me into acting. I had a fabulous teacher, my headmistress's husband, who taught Shakespeare for A-level, and then I found this person called William Shakespeare and a play called *King Lear*. The teacher took us to see it at Stratford and I remember Eric Porter, Alan Howard, Michael Williams and being completely blown away by it. I worked with Eric Porter on *Jewel in the Crown* and I remember sitting opposite him and I couldn't believe that he was there, Eric Porter, who had been my major inspiration, with these incredibly long, beautiful hands, and I remember being mesmerised by these hands and just wanting to say to him 'I'm here today because of you'. He was wonderful."

As *Jewel in the Crown* draws to its conclusion at the end of August, Nice Sarah will disappear, to be replaced by Rose, as *Gold* (the third series of *Band of Gold*) is screened in October. In the meantime, Geraldine will retire to her "little house" in Sussex with Eleanor and her husband Jo Blatchley, a film producer and director at Rada. After *Gold*, James will reappear on screen in a new series of *Kavanagh QC*, scheduled for next January. "My opposing character to Rose is my wonderful QC in *Kavanagh*, Helena Harker. She has a very extraordinary, lateral-thinking mind, she does these great loops in her head. I read it and get mentally exhausted and to play somebody who has that mental agility... it's great. I like her very much."

It's some time since she appeared on stage, and she's itching to return. "I want to do theatre; I really, really want to do more, because I miss it. It's been difficult because there have been things I've had to do personally, that have meant it's quite hard to commit to a long time in the theatre, but next year I will. I'll find something and do it. You feel you're really stretching yourself in the theatre."

"I don't like doing what I've already done. But there's a lot of different kinds of characters that I'd like to play. More comedy, more classical theatre, more European theatre, more movies. I'd love to play a character close to myself in a film... because then it's about revealing, rather than about putting on a character. I try to only do jobs I don't know how to do. I did *Moll Flanders* although I thought it was not remotely interesting, but Morgan Freeman was going to be in it, and I thought 'Christ, I would love to work with Morgan Freeman'. I didn't particularly want to do *Portia in The Merchant of Venice* until I saw Dustin Hoffman was in it."

Some "extraordinary, exotic" people came to see *The Merchant of Venice*, she says. "Robert De Niro came to see it in London, and he'd just gone off the plane, and Dustin was in a terrible state because De Niro was in, and I thought I was being rather marvellous, which is a dangerous thing to ever think. I knew where he was sitting and I just glanced up to see if I was being appreciated by the great De Niro and he was" — she throws back her head, closes her eyes and opens her mouth — "sound asleep."

Another circus skill gets shot down

An unlikely victim of the government's ban on handguns has come to light. The new legislation turns out to be a body blow to circus performers, and will end a tradition dating back to the kinds of acts made famous in Buffalo Bill's *Wild West Show* in the last century. Leading big top proprietor Bobby Roberts Junior, whose current touring summer show involves him juggling and twirling revolvers, is calling for an exemption for performing artists in this week's issue of *The Stage*.

As things stand, all performers who use pistols and revolvers over .22 calibre in their acts must hand them in by the end of next month, or face prosecution for possessing prohibited weapons. So it's either a case of Parliament having to make a last minute exemption, or roll up, roll up for the fantastic Bobby

Roberts Junior and his amazing twirling water pistols.

That other leading big top man Gerry Cottle will need a room to himself if he hands over his arms to the government. Cottle's latest show *The Circus of Horrors* includes flick knives, hand guns, a machine-gun and a flame-thrower. "It's not live ammunition," he exploded as I kept my eye warily on his holster. "This takes all the excitement out of circuses. First we have to lose our animals, now our guns. We're becoming a laughing stock with the rest of the world."

It all does seem rather ridiculous.

Guns in the context of circuses and indeed stage plays are akin to start-

ing pistols — a prop, dramatic but harmless. And it should not be beyond Home Office bureaucracy to exempt not only circuses but all performing arts from the new laws. Only once can I recall a circus

prop of this sort being remotely dangerous. It was actually in Gerry Cottle's own circus some years ago. A now deceased and much loved cowboy juggled guns, threw knives and had a drink problem. By the time of the evening show his aim would grow increasingly erratic. We shall not duck from his like again.

Surreal tales reach me of Andrew Lloyd Webber's annual jamboree at Sydmonton. Each summer, Lord Lloyd Webber throws open his Berkshire stately home to assorted friends for a preview of his latest opus. But this year there was more than a scene from *Whistle Down the Wind* on offer. Guests were surprised to be asked to

take part in a mock-Parliamentary debate on the future of Europe. Well, not so mock actually. A room at Sydmonton was designed as a mini House of Commons. Norman Tebbit was one of the speakers, and the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, was acting out her day job.

Outside, the guests sat on the lawn to listen to Rowan Atkinson give a talk on his passion, fast cars. Here, it turned out, smoking could be a hazard. Some of Lord Lloyd Webber's musical friends do have rather important voices to tend after all. David Frost lit up only to have a note passed to him which read: "Dave, put that cigarette out. Now! Love, Kiri."

That serene piece of nostalgia was

uncovered by the *Museums Journal*. It was from an article written in the 1950s by Thomas Kendrick, then director of the British Museum. Worries over whether to charge, cuts in purchase grant and a host of other problems seem to make managing a major arts institution a little trickier these days. No leisure, no blotting paper, and art there honey-sweet trustees for tea?



David Lister
arts notebook



arts & books



All aboard the festival express

The Edinburgh Festival opens its 50th birthday season this weekend. In an extract from his new novel, 'No Laughing Matter', Peter Guttridge savours the flavour of life on the festival gravy train

Bridget Frost and I were both going up to the Edinburgh Festival. The bitch of the broadsheets, Bridget was loud, pushy, opinionated, grudge-bearing, drunken, vindictive and tacky, but she had her good points. Actually, those were her good points.

She was doing some stuff on the Fringe, which this year was bigger than ever, with around 10,000 performers and 1,200 shows. They were the kind of statistics you got in the press pack. The press office had fun expressing figures in colourful ways: for example, if all the Fringe groups formed a human tower by standing on each other's shoulders, they would exceed the height of the world's tallest building by 14 kilometres. Well, yes I do find that interesting.

I was going by train, Bridget by plane. Depending on your point of view, four hours on a train in the company of a bunch of writers may or may not count as a good time. But, if you're freelance, you don't turn down a free first-class return ticket when it's on offer. The Edinburgh Book Festival had two first class carriages, stacked with free food and booze, reserved for London's literary crew on a Scotland-bound InterCity 225 leaving King's Cross.

The trip was intended to be a party. My ticket even had a "plus guest" on it. But I was travelling alone. Sad, eh? I had thought of inviting Bridget to travel with me but putting her in a sealed carriage with a bunch of literary types was like giving the fox a den in the henhouse. Fortunately, she preferred flying.

I've always found it best to keep booze away from writers. The history of drunkenness in literature teaches us that it's the poets you have to watch, but children's authors can be pretty tricky too. I envisaged that the combination of free drink and artistic temperament meant friendships springing up by Peterborough could be legendary feuds by York.

The trip was, however, sadly uneventful. People table-hopped along the aisles. A couple of film crews for those cable channels that no one ever watches shot footage with the look of people in whom hope was battling with experience. PRs ferried journalists to and from the handful of celebrity authors. As the bottles of wine and whisky circulated, things got a little raucous but, as an attractive American woman pointed out to a group at the table next to mine, there was no shagging in the aisles.

The train was on time into Waverley Station. A tall, strapping man in his fifties was standing on the platform in a kilt and sporran, as if to assure us we were indeed in Scotland. I immediately assumed he was a laird, whatever one of those was, but I overheard someone else saying he played the bagpipes on street corners for loose change. When I looked closer, I saw that, although he had a dark tuck down one stocking, the effect was spoilt by the quarter-bottle of whisky tucked down the other. That evening I went into Charlotte

Square to the Book Festival. Edinburgh was undergoing an atypical heatwave and the tents in which the festival took place had their doors open to let in air on the sweating hordes within. I listened from the doorway as Joanna Trollope and Michael Dobbs, looking slightly indignant, defended TV adaptations of their works.

I went into the spiegeltent, a wonderful 1920s Austrian beer tent, and sat with my beer in one of the wood and glass booths around the outer rim. Sipping my drink, I looked through the Fringe brochure. Irvine Welsh was still hip and omnipresent. Six different versions of *Macbeth*. A musical history of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Not my thing really. Oscar, the Hypnotising Dog, now that was more like it.

Half-a-dozen musicians were milling around on the small stage, fiddling with microphone stands and amplifiers. When they started up, a woman sitting a few yards away started getting into it – legs bobbing, fingers snapping, head shaking. I wouldn't have minded but it wasn't exactly the birth of the cool. Just a bunch of middle-management types in candy-striped waistcoats, beer guts and straw hats playing Dixieland. The woman clapped out of time.

Bridget slid into the booth beside me.

"Been to a show yet?"

"I've been down at the Film Festival," I said. "Gone talking to a director from Iceland – probably the only director from Iceland – about a comedy he'd just made there. He told me it reflected the fact a good proportion of the people are suicidally depressed in winter, merely suicidal come spring and alcoholic all year round."

"Sounds a laugh a minute," Bridget scowled at the musicians. "I've been to two. I don't understand why they always seem to put the noisy shows right next-door to the quiet ones, with only a cardboard partition between. They might as well put all the noisy shows together and let them fight it out like a psychotic Battle of the Bands."

"What'd you see?"

"I saw a musical about Robert Burns. I thought I was seeing out about Rasputin but I went next-door by mistake. The accents of the actors were so thick it took me 20 minutes to realise. It was only when Rasputin started reciting a poem to a hagis, I twigged something was amiss. I'd thought the kilts were making a statement about universal experience."

The band struck up another dire tune from the good old days of Dixie.

"They should be on a paddle steamer on the Mississippi," I said, grimacing. "Preferably one that's sinking. Why don't we go outside?"

Edited extract from 'No Laughing Matter' by Peter Guttridge, published in hardback at £16.99 by Headline Book Publishing and available from all bookshops, or by credit card – at the special discount price of £12.99 – from Bookpoint on 01235 400414 (lines open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)



One from the heart

David Hare explains why Shaw's 1921 state-of-the-nation play is due for revival

In the confident days of post-war expansion, most theatre companies were able to rotate the same classic authors to make up a repertoire of plays which Ken Campbell once wittily christened "brochure theatre". At your local playhouse you could expect to see Shakespeare playing in a regular team of writers who usually included Wilde, Ibsen and Arthur Miller. But more recently, as theatres have suffered from public underfunding and as the comfortable literary consensus which underpinned their choices has disappeared, so artistic directors have needed to adopt a bolder and more improvisational approach to their job. Some famous writers have continued to thrive. Chekhov's four best-known plays are still relentlessly revived. But the most eminent victim of this enforced shake-down has been the problematic figure of George Bernard Shaw. Sometimes it is as if we no longer quite know what to do with him.

On the publication of the final volume of Michael Holroyd's brilliant three-part biography in 1992, several reviewers noted how unfortunate it was that the 15 years it had taken Holroyd to write the book had coincided with an irreversible decline in his subject's reputation. It would be hard, they insisted, to imagine a playwright more thoroughly out of fashion. Shaw was associated with an era of rational Fabianism which no longer spoke to the modern world. His plays, with their notorious long sentences and stagy attitudes, embodied a fearful attitude to sex which our own more full-blooded age found spinsterish and immature. The characters were authorial mouthpieces – puppets, not people.

David Hare (above, centre) in rehearsal with Richard Griffiths

The playwright once described as "the creator of modern consciousness" had become a victim of the fact that he had so completely dominated his own time. He had, in short, been superseded. If these reviewers had looked a little harder, they would have found that their supposed reassessments of Shaw more truly reflected the doubts which some audiences had enjoyed about his work from the beginning. The character of Bernard Shaw himself often commanded an interest and authority far wider than any of the individual plays he actually wrote. If *Heartbreak House* is, as its author suggested, his *Leah*, then it has to be said that from the outset it has suffered a far more mixed press than Shakespeare's greatest masterpiece. Billed, perhaps misleadingly, as a fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes, it played at the Royal Court in Shaw's own 1921 production for over four hours. Its length alone attracted a level of dismissive vituperation which Shaw's recent detractors could hardly hope to emulate. Shaw's attempts to mix high farce with divine tragedy, and to marble an apparent comedy of manners with grave presentations of impending catastrophe have elicited an exasperation in some spectators which has never truly abated.

The purpose of reviving *Heartbreak House* just before the millennium (without altering or updating the text) is to take a timely look at the century's first and outstanding state-of-the-nation play, aware that it exhibits many of the characteristics of that extraordinary genre which has given modern British drama so much of its distinctive spirit.

By gathering together a collection of Bloomsbury-like bohemians in a Sussex house, Shaw appears to set off in a familiar Chekhovian direction, analysing the destiny of a country by portraying the life and loves of a representative group of middle-class people. He looks ahead to the coming century and sees it as no friendly place for romantics or adventurers, but belonging instead to a narrow new class of depressing capitalists who are determined to reduce life to its lowest common denominator. Who can say he was wrong? Yet even in this overall scheme, so uncannily prophetic about the world we now live in – Captain Shotover, for instance, is working on Ronald Reagan's Star Wars strategy, the weapon which will destroy all other weapons – there is a wildness of texture, a sheer strangeness of vision which is often so personal and peculiar that we may almost rub our ears, in danger of

disbelieving what we have heard.

Many critics have rightly drawn attention to the zaniness of Shaw's humour. His playfulness with theatre itself is taken to prefigure the arrival of absurdist like Beckett and Ionesco. But less noticed, it seems, is Shaw's underlying steel. Under the surface of the play – which shifts around in the manner of all great, elusive work – lies the disturbing contention that it is not useful to try and be happy; that happiness, indeed, may be only a failure and a lure. Using a method of reversal which is notably Brechtian, Shaw reveals how easily the wish to enjoy life may slip into a deadly infatuation with dreams.

No wonder this uncomfortable portrait of a society in which people are haphazardly distracted from their better purposes is one which theatregoers have sometimes found hard to contemplate. But they have also not been helped by a view of the play which emphasises its frivolity and rhetoric at the expense of its deeper feelings. Far from the governing tone being either light-hearted or elegiac, it is, on the contrary, full of the feverishness of genuine despair. Underneath the hanger, underneath the central story of a young girl growing up in the course of a single evening, lies a sense of wasted passion that belies Shaw's reputation as a cold or cerebral writer. "It has more of the miracle, more of the mystic belief in it than any of my others," wrote the author of his own favourite play. It also, he might have added, has more of the heart.

David Hare's production of *Heartbreak House* is at the Almeida Theatre, London N1, from 3 Sept to 11 Oct, previewing from Thursday. Booking: 0171-359 4404

Edinburgh coverage

What is this garbage about music being the highest art form? The Independent's comprehensive coverage of this year's 51st Edinburgh Festival begins in the broadsheet on Monday when American choreographer Twyla Tharp explains her philosophy of dance to David Benedict.

Plus, for all the latest news and reviews from the International, Fringe and Film Festivals, see the daily Tabloid, Tuesday to Friday

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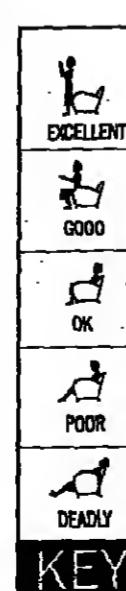
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KEY

David Benedict
WEEK IN REVIEW

critical view
on view
on view
on view
on view



our view
on view



THE PLAY Life Support

Once again, Alan Bates takes the leading role in a new play by Simon Gray. This time he stars as a fraudulent travel writer stung into grief as he attends the bedside of his wife (Georgina Hale) who lies in a coma. Harold Pinter, an old hand when it comes to directing Gray, is back in charge with Carole Nimmons, Nickolas Grace and Frank McCusker in supporting roles.

Paul Taylor found it "moving, astute, often funny. (Alan Bates) does the author especially proud ... He superbly suggests a man struggling to master overwhelming grief". "One of Gray's finest, strongest exercises in sardonic tragedy, black comedy, categorise it how you will," averred *The Times*. "Gripes throughout ... When Bates suddenly surges with anger, or succumbs to a devastating sense of loss, the dramatic effect is explosive," gasped the *Telegraph*. "Quietly moving if lacking in theatrical dynamism ... perversely, one sometimes sighs for a touch of the old talent to abuse," admitted *The Guardian*. "A tremendously moving, bed-bound performance by Georgina Hale ... a civilised rather than a memorable evening," decided the *Mail*.

At the Aldwych Theatre, London WC2 (0171-416 6003) to 18 Oct.

Don't be put off by the seemingly bleak scenario. A fine production.

THE FILM Bean

Rowan Atkinson breaks silence by adding his voice to a big-screen re-creation of his stupefyingly popular TV persona of the bumbling incompetent, serenely unaware of the chaos he creates around him. Older readers will recognise him as a graduate of the Harry Worth / Norman Wisdom school. Written by Richard (*Four Weddings*) Curtis and Robin Driscoll and directed by Mel Smith.

Ryan Gilbey likened it to "Mr Magoo with added malice and mucus ... if the film has anything in its favour, it's brevity". "Bean is not an acquired taste, you either have it or not. You might, though, in a moment of doubt, or panic, try to unacquire it. For instance, after seeing this movie," warned the *FT*. "The kind of shallow movie that only works if you shut your mind to the qualities of all great comedies: rigour, intelligence, imagination and humanity," thundered *The Times*. "Highlights include pants wetting, eruptions of nasal snot and a bag of vomit burst playfully over someone's head," shuddered *The Standard*. "These gags are not so much cheap as bargain basement," scolded the *Telegraph*.

Cert PG. 89 mins. On release absolutely everywhere.

See *Grosse Pointe Blank* instead.

On Monday, the Kirov Ballet returned to the Coliseum with Lavrovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, added confirmation that they have triumphantly survived their post-Communist Impoverishment. Altnay Asymuratova danced a yearningly fateful Juliet, with Viktor Baranov as her Romeo. It was the Queen Mum's 97th birthday. Mercutio's testosterone-drenched performance was an ideal gift.

Lois Leveen enthused about the production: "A stag-line of enormously promising young men ... Almost operatic staging gives the street scenes a verismo and vitality enhanced by the full-blooded dancing and zestful mime of the tip-tilted beauty". "The Kirov's Koh-i-noor diamond has been their prima ballerina Altnay Asymuratova... Has any dancer ever been so completely gifted?" gasped the *Telegraph*. "Looks odd," mused the *FT*, which still had to concur, and she justified every moment. None of the other playing came near her.

The Kirov end their UK visit with a second Fokine programme at the Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300) today at 2pm and 7.30pm.

Highly recommended: lustful, erotic, passionately, delicately sensual and beautifully danced. Sorry you missed *Romeo and Juliet*, but see *Fokine* if you can.

India at 50	7
Holroyd's definitive	
Shaw	8
American poetry	8
Fiction on the front line	6

IVAN KYNCL

play
for

150



Playing for time

He sang before he could speak. He's been playing the piano since he could reach the keys. And some already place him in the pantheon of all-time keyboard greats. Now, at 26, Evgeny Kissin has been rewarded with the Proms' first ever solo recital. But first he plays a game of verbal chess with Edward Seckerson

When Evgeny Kissin was a year old (or so he's reliably informed), he stood up in his cot, pointed decisively at the piano, and uttered one word: "OPEN!" So any suggestion that this prodigy was shamelessly exploited can be quickly discounted. His parents were obedient. They hadn't planned things this way (sons grow up to be engineers like their fathers, don't they?). His mother played, his elder sister played. Evgeny listened. He was such a quiet child. (Didn't they realise he was listening?) He was no trouble. (Didn't they realise he was concentrating?) He sang before he could speak. Bach's A major Fugue. His sister was studying it at the time. (Didn't they realise he needed quiet to memorise it?) He was 11 months old. Not yet old enough to reach the keyboard. (A minor detail.) But time was pressing. And the initiative was his. "OPEN!" Like I say, his parents were obedient.

There is something unearthly about Kissin's demeanour, the walk to the piano, the bow – lanky, awkward, diffident... And then he plays, and the awkwardness falls away, and there is total harmony – mind, body, spirit.

process will be slow and painstaking, that to reach him, to understand him, will require one to probe beyond the concise, even cryptic, responses he at first volunteers, to coax and cajole, maybe even *tease* a little.

cajole, maybe even insist a little. You begin with a concession of sorts. He is so plainly an intuitive musician, a born communicator, that talking about music must be difficult for him? "Very much so..." Long pause (whatever you do, don't jump in now or you'll kill the punchline)... "but not impossible." A half-smile, as if to say, "Well done, good start, you've got my number." And I have. Kissin is not an easy interviewee. His English is excellent: fluent, authoritative, only slightly accented. But he uses words sparingly (fair enough, it's his fingers that do the talking). And he thinks long and hard about which words. Sometimes they're not worth waiting for, other times they really hit the spot. It depends. The waiting can be unnerving, even frustrating, and on occasions your question may be met with a scowl or an irritated-sounding counter-thrust, which isn't rudeness, just concentration. Kissin likes to play chess. I'd say he

awkward, it... And plays, and awkwardness, way, and is total

itself that verbalising it sometimes feels pointless, even vulgar." So how does he imagine I feel having to do just that each and every working day? It's a light-hearted rebuke. He is unfazed. "It's quite different for critics and musicologists. My task is to present music as music, not as words..." Check, but not yet mate.

Kissin *needs* to play the piano almost as much as he *wants* to. Ask him if he feels he missed out on not having a "normal" childhood (a respiratory problem kept him from school long before his performing did) and his answer is "No, not at all, because sitting at the piano playing was what I wanted to do more than anything in the world." But how could he possibly have known, at two or three years of age? "I don't think I ever knew. It was an *urge*, purely instinctive." So playing the piano *never* felt like a substitute, the last refuge of a lonely child? Parental pressure was never brought to bear? Only to practise. He never enjoyed practice. He could happily *play* "all day long", but practice—that was something else. Now, of course, there is less of a distinction to be drawn. He practises—meaning he sits down to play—as much as he needs to. And he instinctively knows how much that is? "Yes, of course."

Kissin made his concert debut at the age of 10 in Mozart's Piano Concerto K466. A year later he played his first solo recital in Moscow. Then came the big one. In March 1984, he performed both Chopin Piano Concertos in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the State Philharmonic under Dmitri Kitaenko. The call went out around the world: "This kid is going to put Horowitz out of business." Herbert von Karajan beckoned from Berlin. The story goes that he was so entranced by the precocious 17-year-olds account of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto that he forgot to cue the flute's entry after the cadenza. Kissin is 26 now and some believe that a place has already been reserved for him in the pantheon of all-time keyboard greats. Mark Zilberquist, the American critic and author of *Great Russian Pianists*, was quoted as saying: "He is partly on earth and partly somewhere else. He was never a child prodigy, but a small genius. Now he is just a genius."

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So how is it with performance? Does he

small genius. Now he is just a genius."

"Partly on earth and partly somewhere else..."

Now there's a phrase that stays with you. There is something unearthly, other-worldly, about Kissin's appearance and demeanour. You see it first from afar, from your seat in the concert hall. The walk to the piano, the bow - lanky, awkward, diffident, as if the child has not quite grown into the man's body, as if that giant leap from childhood to manhood happened so fast that there simply wasn't time. And then he plays, and the awkwardness, the diffidence falls away, and there is total harmony - mind, body, spirit. Meeting Kissin - face to face - alters the perspective, but does little to dispel those first impressions. It's a child's face, an open face, with this shock of big hair which appears to have gone AWOL from a David Lynch movie. The smile is nervous but sincere, the manner charming but professional. He knows how to behave in an interview situation (as in: he'd rather be undergoing root canal work but doesn't show it), though it soon becomes apparent that the

much that is?" Yes, of course.

So how is it with performance? Does he know, does he instinctively know, when it's working, when the dots on the page begin taking on a life of their own? Leonard Bernstein always maintained that he could gauge precisely how well or otherwise a performance was going by the extent to which he felt he was composing the piece himself. Kissin can relate to that. He describes the feeling as one of total release, as if all your concerns - technical and otherwise - suddenly, mysteriously, evaporate and you are at ease, at one, with the piece.

"The element of improvisation is often present in my playing. Of course this depends on the repertoire. But this element is often present, and in such moments when I feel especially inspired, when everything is falling into place, it is present to an even higher degree..." And so a piece like Schumann's C major Fantasy - that most exalted song of love and longing from Robert to Clara (check out Kissin's RCA recording) - becomes his song, caught (or

so it would seem) in the moment of creation, in the playing of it. And when that happens, when Kissin is flying, we all get sucked into the jet stream.

is flying, we all get sucked into the jet stream. But how about when it doesn't happen? How about the occasions (and there must be some) when the force is simply not with him? What then? Engage automatic pilot? Some critics have suggested that Kissin's prodigious technique can be a handicap, that knowing he can rely upon it takes the imperative out of his playing: "I cannot rely on anything unless I prepare well," he replies, in a manner redolent of an official statement. But he has taken the point. And he has a story to tell. Ten years ago, while on tour in Japan with the Moscow Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and their violinist/conductor Vladimir Spivakov, he "didn't play as well as he should have". After the concert, Spivakov came to his room to ask what had happened. "I explained that my mood was all wrong, that I just couldn't find a way into the music. And he said something that has stayed with me ever since. He said, 'A real artist must be able to

create the right mood for himself."

So he never knowingly coasts the music, never knowingly goes along for the ride. Some performances yield more than others: unexpected details, different inflections, voicings, colours, a unique atmosphere. Some performances simply provide more answers than others. How does that feel? "Very nice." Just "very nice"? What if it's a special moment: do you think about it afterwards, analyse it, seek to preserve it? "Difficult to say..." And here comes another of those interminable pauses for thought, here comes the scowl, the shifty silence. He starts to form a sentence but stops. You want to help him out but you know not to. He's focusing. This reply will be worthy of Gary Kasparov... "I'm not even sure that I always remember those moments. As far as preserving them is concerned, well, as long as I preserve my love for the music and that in turn inspires me in performance, then those things will keep happening by themselves. Which doesn't

mean," he adds in a rare burst of animation, "that everything that's good about my playing happens spontaneously. Not at all. I always have a clear plan in my head of how I'm going to play. But I often have to make things *sound* spontaneous. That is, of course, different from when something just comes to me unexpectedly during a performance. Both elements are important and complementary."

to analyse. I simply can't say..." Any more than he can say what it is about 18th-century French painting and Italian opera (yes, even Verdi, *particularly* Verdi) that he so dislikes. Kissin is full of surprises. He likes walking. And you're purring in agreement - "Ah, yes, long country walks..." - when he adds,

...long solitary walks... — when he adds, "fast walks in cities". He reckons if he weren't a musician he would either be a journalist or a tour guide. How so? Exploration. Discovery. Different places, different cultures, different languages. Just like music. "And as tour guide you are showing the same things to different people, over and over again. And you have to keep them interested. Just like playing..." He sometimes plays for friends. Just for friends. It's the nearest he gets to those solitary childhood

days when he played just for pleasure. Does he ever feel that the audience is an intrusion, that even one listener is too many? "NEVER." (The emphasis he places on that one word speaks volumes.) "I play for those who come to listen to me. My audiences are an inspiration to me. And if they are not, then it's usually my fault. It's my business to keep them interested and attentive..."

to make sure. But it really isn't necessary. Among Kissin's press cuttings is the story of a recital in Bologna where fire officers were forced to turn off the electricity at midnight after his 13th encore. His Prom is at 3pm. John Eliot Gardiner and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique are due on at 7.30.

Eugeny Kissin at the Proms: 3pm tomorrow, Royal Albert Hall, London SW7 (0171-589 8212) and live on BBC Radio 3. Kissin's new recording of Beethoven's Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 5 is released this week on Sony Classical (SK 6 2026).

JEAN
RENO

A black and white advertisement for the 1968 film 'Rosemary's Baby'. The top half features a grainy, high-contrast image of a woman's face, partially obscured by shadows. The bottom half features the title 'Rosemary's Baby' in a large, stylized, cursive font. To the left of the title, there is a circular logo with the text 'FILM OF THE MONTH' at the top, 'GOOD HOUSEKEEPING' in the middle, 'OPTIONS' below it, 'MARIE CLAIRE' at the bottom, and 'SHE' at the very bottom. The overall aesthetic is dark and mysterious, fitting the horror genre of the film.

MERCEDES
RUEHL

'Sheard, 1957' from 'Marc Riboud in China: forty years of photography' (Thames & Hudson, £35)
PHOTOGRAPH: MARC RIBOUD/MAGNUM



House of the spirits

Is fiction closer to astrology or history?

Justin Wintle
balances hard fact
and heavenly fancy
in two far-eastern
family sagas

The Bondmaid by Catherine Lim, Oriel, £5.99;
One Thousand Chestnut Trees by Mira Stout,
Flamingo, £16.99

Some years ago, returning from the Far East, I had a peculiar experience in Hatchard's, the London bookseller. Standing in front of the fiction table, anxious to discover what everyone had been up to in my absence but still debilitated by dysentery, with my head therefore lighter than a Kyoto parasol, lighter even than a Java firefly's fitful evanescence, an apprisional thought welled up. Fiction is of the same order as astrology. Like astrologists, novelists seek to impose their make-believe on an unsuspecting public according to rules they themselves have fabricated. So why take what they write so seriously?

As I re-immersed myself in literary culture, this seditious insight receded. Yet, asked to review Catherine Lim, I was reminded of that moment of enlightenment. Is this a criticism of *The Bond-*

maid? I hope not. Rather, it is to draw attention to the remarkable skill of its Singaporean author. The story she tells is conventional enough, by occidental as well as oriental standards. A tiny girl, Han, is sold by her impoverished mother to a Mandarin family. The fortunes of the House of Wu, however, hang precariously by a single thread: the young master, just two years older than Han,

What follows is fatal-attraction chop suey. The two children form an inseparable attachment that their elders, employers and servants do everything in their power to stymie. At length the young master is sent away. He returns a "scholar", fit for betrothal to Li-Li, the ornamental daughter of the even more prestigious House of Gheng. The main line of the House of Wu will be spared, at least for another generation.

But inevitably the bond between the young master and the serving girl reasserts itself. Neither Han's beauty, nor her craving, can remain forever cloaked by her plain garments. And if the reader

has a strong premonition of the unhappy dénouement, then – allowing for a few strange twists – that premonition is likely to prove correct.

In fiction, as in cuisine, it is the sauce with the meat that satisfies. *The Bondmaid* is decked out, upstairs and downstairs, with a gallery of characters finely balanced between stereotype and individuality: a sybaritic great-grandfather, for example, now confined to his bed and attended by his vengeful servant Chu; a matriarch who cannot properly sustain her stern code; a head bondmaid, the sour spinster Choyin, who willingly sustains it for her; an imbecile called Spitface. A whole gamut of deftly painted human props is here.

Even the ever-wifful Han is – for anyone familiar with, say, Gong Li in *Raise the Red Lantern* – a recognisable type. What animates and humanises Lim's puppets is their superstition. The priest aside, all imagine themselves to be in thrall to gods and spirits. The drama of the protagonists is shadowed by a cooties between the near-omnipotent

Sky God and the lesser Forgetful Goddess.

Catherine Lim doesn't for a moment suppose the spirit world exists outside of human hopes and fears, but inside, they are real enough. Hers is a version of the Chinese in Singapore set in a semi-recurrent past untroubled by the Japanese invasion or the Malay Emergency. The only historical alignment is with the present, when we discover that the Wu estate has become a petrochemical plant. Even so, *The Bondmaid* surpasses the pulp paperback market earmarked by its publisher.

I cared less for *One Thousand Chestnut Trees*,

mainly because it seems chronically undecided as to what it wants to be other than the Korean counterpart of Jung Chang's unmatched *Wild Swans*. A young woman, of mixed Korean and Irish-American parentage, leaves New York for some soul-searching in her mother's native land. She pieces together a family history which, being determined by the deadliest 20th-century conflicts, is woeful enough. The narrative is split between three

voices: the young woman's, her mother's and her grandfather's, and the result issued as a novel.

That classification becomes increasingly arbitrary. The voices blur and there are too many passages of lacklustre travel reportage, including mandatory shopping and foodie paragraphs. Large chunks of Korean history are recycled on flat tyres.

Mira Stout's real concern, in what I suspect is a thinly veiled family memoir, is the mother-daughter relationship. To appease her mother the girl undertakes to visit the chestnuts of the title, a grove planted on a mountain near the border with North Korea to screen a family shrine from soldiers. But although she is foiled by the weather, somehow the journey achieves its objective.

A determined push, and Mira Stout might have got there. Despite an enviable gift for natural description, she has difficulty in shaping her material. Writing novels may indeed be an arcane practice, but for all that a strict one too. How hard the subject-matter presses is incidental.

Fiction on the front line

Good prose, pity about the poetry,
says Philippa Gregory

Patrimony by Jane Thynne,
Fourth Estate, £9.99

The trick of any sort of whodunit or who-is-it novel is the sly revelation of clues to the reader without blowing the plot altogether. Equally, if one is to create any faith in the hero, then he or she has to be at least one jump ahead. In the case of *Patrimony* the reader is bellowing "Look behind you!" from about page 150, but the heroine remains stubbornly unaware. Heavy breathing on her answer phone, four burglaries which no one reports to the police, the disappearance of a colleague, all fail to disturb our heroine with the notion that something is up.

What is up is the slow uncovering of a secret history of a World War One poet, a contemporary of Sassoon and Owen. Disastrously, his poetry is quoted in the novel:

*He vowed to serve his country
For King and common good
But no pledge prepared him for the
fate he met*

Stumbling out there in the mud

Advice to all non-poet authors: never invent poetry and fail it as great literature. The exception to this rule is Antonia Byatt.

This flaw is compounded as the plot hinges on our heroine correctly identifying other newly-discovered poetry as the ghostly doggerel of the poet's talents' daughter:

*Like the barrel of a gun in the
hand of a spy
The sun regards us with a
dispassionate eye*

*We're in the unambiguous world of
After
Where the cloudless landscape
doesn't lie*

Well, search me, but I thought that they were both equally awful and thus oo-clue at all.

Thynne's ear for her own prose is erratic. There is some genuinely fine writing, but the reader is thrown off course by a sudiose phrase of teeth-gritting awfulness. Our heroine "shunned the rites of reconciliation" which means, I suppose, that she

refused a solacing screw, a beneficent bonk, a forgiving f*** – alliteration is a terrible thing.

We are on safer ground with the unfolding of the two stories that make the body of the novel. The contemporary story is that of Elsa, who works in an independent film production company and wants to make a film about the World War One poet. Valentine Siddons. Her discovery of the mystery behind the legend leads her into a personal discovery too – of the man she is ready to love. It is a simple romance but it is told with conviction and verve.

Their story is intertwined with that of the poet himself, who marries young and foolishly, loves an older and selfish woman, and goes to his death at Passchendaele. The two stories are told alternately, and inevitably there is a drift of interest towards the story of love, frustration and death, and away from the lighter notes of the modern story. Contemporary life has less glamour than prewar Edwardian England, the issues for Valentine Siddons are graver than those of his modern-day biographers.

When the poet is sent forward to the front line, the narrative takes a darker and powerful turn. This part of the novel is excellently researched and movingly told. Thynne has the ability to paint a landscape, and explore a character, and her skills are well-deployed in the poignant descriptions of a country-side and men destroyed by war. Elsa, the modern heroine, speaks from the heart when she says that to make a romantic and rosy picture of such a past is to betray the dead who were forced to their deaths in a war that was neither rosy nor romantic. Thynne's narrative is a family by a father's experiences in a Japanese prisoner of war camp.

Zelda, a second-hand clothes dealer who lives with her female lover, Foxy, learns that her father has committed suicide. She renews her memories, searching for a key to understanding his misery, and turns to a relatively happy period just at the edge of puberty. With consummate skill, Glaister evokes the unalloyed sweetness of a child's pleasure: a tree house complete with an ant farm, the smell of a baking Swiss roll, the peace of early mornings.

But at night Zelda lies braced for her father's screams, which regularly jar the household from its sleep. Although never spoken, his trauma is acted out through strange habits. History's significance is woven through the novel. Foxy is an oral historian, but adopted and with no interest in finding her birth parents; Zelda dresses in Forties' fashions.



Embedded in the past: David Bowie in 'Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence' PHOTO: KOBAL

Julie Wheelwright on the captive's life sentence

Easy Peasy by Lesley Glaister, Bloomsbury, £15.99

Half a century after the Second World War's end, its psychological reverberations still ripple quietly through our lives. But the impact on the thirtysomething generation of their parents' war is a rich seam largely ignored until recently. Now Lesley Glaister explores the shaping of a family by a father's experiences in a Japanese prisoner of war camp.

Zelda, a second-hand clothes dealer who lives with her female lover, Foxy, learns that her father has committed suicide. She renews her memories, searching for a key to understanding his misery, and turns to a relatively happy period just at the edge of puberty. With consummate skill, Glaister evokes the unalloyed sweetness of a child's pleasure: a tree house complete with an ant farm, the smell of a baking Swiss roll, the peace of early mornings.

But at night Zelda lies braced for her father's screams, which regularly jar the household from its sleep. Although never spoken, his trauma is acted out through strange habits. History's significance is woven through the novel. Foxy is an oral historian, but adopted and with no interest in finding her birth parents; Zelda dresses in Forties' fashions.

Tropical baroque and roll

Alberto Manguel shares his passion for a perfect summer's read

The Agüero Sisters
by Cristina García, Picador, £15.99

John Ruskin would not have been happy in the tropics: he didn't approve of Nature having human passions. "The state of mind that attributes to it those characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unthugged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect." Well, maybe in England. But in Cuba (or in the New Cuba aka Miami) things are different. The weather is vengeful, the earth greedy, the fruit erotic, the birds ominous, the water full of dangerous memories. To survive, one must observe these emotions and learn from them. Ruskin wouldn't have lasted a day.

In Cristina García's second novel, two sisters, one in Miami and one in Cuba, learn through trial and error to read Nature's changing moods. Reina, the Cuban, an electrician trained by *Revolution*, is adept at taming electrical power, but that does not prevent her from becoming its victim. While attempting to lift electric pumps from the jungle mud, she is felled by a bolt of lightning that leaves her radiant with sensual heat and in need of skin grafts. Constanza, in her Florida exile, can command from flowers and fruits the essences needed for her celebrated beauty concoctions, but she will not need to Goddess of Nature, Oshun (who in Christian lands is also the Virgin Mary) and must eventually make amends for her stubbornness. Hoping that together they may begin to make sense of their disjointed lives, Reina travels to Miami to live with her sister, from whom she was separated in childhood.

To understand the will of Nature, the sisters must understand themselves. Nature's emotions (Ruskin would have had a fit) are reflected in the sisters as in two dark mirrors, and also in those who surround them: their parents, whose love ended in murder and suicide; their grandfather from

distant Spain; their inefficient husbands and lovers; their difficult daughters who must repeat their mothers' mistakes until the chain is broken.

Half adventure story and half romantic thriller, *The Agüero Sisters* is packed with clues to the sisters' identity: in the past, the father's attraction to rare, or vanished species, and the mother's uncanny ability to discover lost worlds, in the present, Reina's sexual avidity which her own daughter inherits, and Constanza's appropriation of her mother's features until she can no longer recognise herself. "Life is in the mirror," runs a line of verse her father once taught Reina, "and you are the original death." The sisters' quest, in the end, is no more than the search for their own mortality.

In 16th-century Spain, the baroque artists of the Counter-Reformation devised a clever method for making sense of the divine mystery and yet allowing it to remain secret. They surrounded a kernel of meaning with layers of volutes and flourishes, so that its existence could only be guessed at from its outer skin. Cristina García (who writes in English) has used this device to great effect in this formidable and enthralling novel. Both Cuban realities – life on the island under Castro, and exile and wishful thinking in Miami – are utterly convincing and ultimately mysterious. The sisters' rich saga takes place simultaneously in the daily Cuban world of home cooking, Castro's restrictions and Miami's politics of exile, as well as in the numinous world of gods older than history – gods of earth and water whom most of us have chosen to forget.

From the first luscious pages describing a duck hunt in Cuba to the epilogue (which retells the hunt, this time charged with our knowledge of that "thin, permanent season", the future), *The Agüero Sisters* cannot be put down. Sexy, romantic, redolent of the tropics, it is a perfect summer's read – even in the soher land of Ruskin.

JPW 150

Ancient and modern: India at 50

Michael Arditti takes a taboo-breaking tour of the underworld

The Invisibles by Zia Jaffrey, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £15.99

In 1984, Zia Jaffrey travelled from America to Delhi for a family wedding. She was astonished to discover the uninvited but tolerated presence of the *hijras* (eunuchs), who sang raucously, mimicked childbirth, insulted the guests and were paid handsomely for their pains. Her wish to learn more about this ancient tradition was discouraged. Instead, she was advised to "study something useful, like our urban development planning". Fortunately, stubbornness prevailed.

The result 12 years later, was *The Invisibles*, which might have been titled *The Unknowables*. Although Jaffrey undertakes a fascinating voyage around the *hijras*, much about them – from their development to their current strength, variously estimated at between 25,000 and 1,250,000 – remains a mystery. Despite the apparent openness of a particular eunuch "family", their revelations are carefully guarded. They are happy to discuss the more socially acceptable aspects of their lives (their presence at weddings and after childbirth) while categorically denying any murkier practices: kidnap, mutilation and prostitution.

The Invisibles, appropriately for its subject, is a hybrid. The quest for the *hijras* provides Jaffrey (and the reader) with the opportunity to discover India. She describes herself as born with "that spiritual wishy-washiness" of being neither Indian nor American. The "otherness" of the *hijras* mirrors her own. Her aunt warns her that to study the eunuchs will make no man want her; the subject is so taboo in polite society that she is ushered out of a party when she broaches it. On the other hand, friends and contacts go out of their way to help her, battling with an inefficient bureaucracy.

One part of Jaffrey's scheme is to provide a historical perspective on the *hijras*. She is told that in contemporary *hijra* society "all castes are represented... Hindu and Muslims alike". Their origins are, however, more contentious. They are mentioned in the ancient Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. It is probable that the tradition, which flourished in North India, derived from Hinduism and grew in prominence under Islam.

Jaffrey quotes Western observers from Marco Polo onwards on the role of eunuchs under the feudal rulers. Some commended their loyalty, most denounced their barbarism and servility. She notes the British attempt to destroy their privileges as part of the policy of ridding India of her "debased oriental practices". In the event, all they did was to drive the *hijras* from the countryside to become part of the urban underclass, which the British largely ignored.

Her exploration of this underclass constitutes the most engrossing sections of the book. She provides a gruesome eyewitness account of a castration ceremony, where a boy is made to sit on a thickly oiled wooden phallus prior to having his testicles removed. Other sources tell of the *hijras* cutting off their own penises (which palace eunuchs had to produce, pickled in jars, as proof of their impotence). One common way for the *hijras* to extort money is by threatening to expose themselves; another is by threatening to expose the impotence of married men. They have the licensed raillery of Shakespearean fools, witnessed when they sing at the birth of the first child (after 12 years) of a Hyderabad businessman and name the boy as the son of the family's cook.

In the last resort, there is a sadness about the *hijras*, exemplified for Jaffrey when she returns to India after 10 years and finds the original "family" who befriended her in ruins. Indian society is ordered around families. Excluded from ordinary families, the *hijras* create an alternative, grouped around a guru, but it is one born of desperation rather than freedom. The self-mutilation is the antithesis of any exploration of sexual ambiguity that might be welcomed in the West.

This is a lucid, sympathetic and unsensational exploration of a unique phenomenon. At the end, one of Jaffrey's correspondents writes that he hopes that "you will be fair in dealing with the subject, so that it may not hurt the feelings of any caste or creed or person". It is a hope which she has admirably fulfilled.

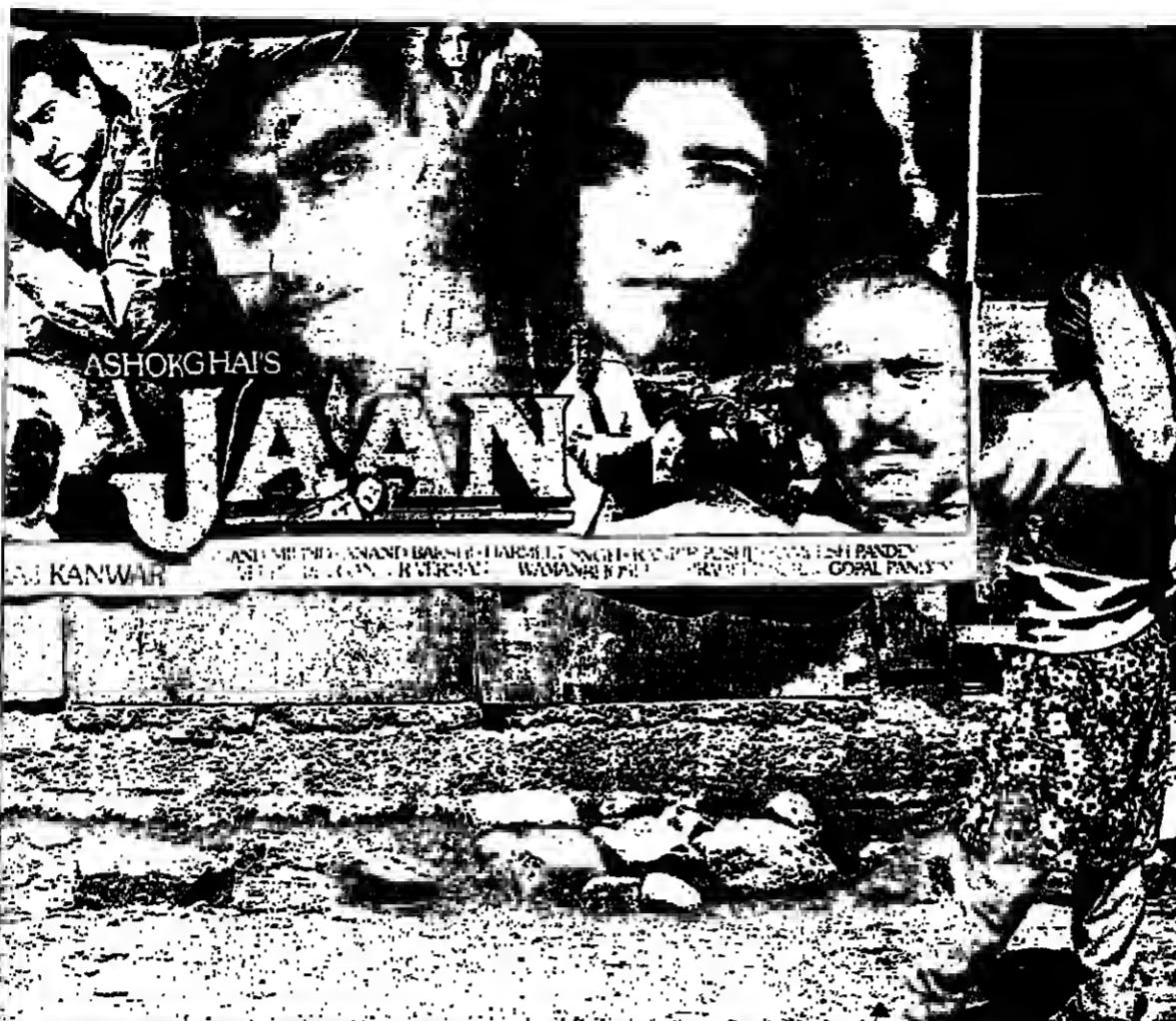
Saint and spinner: Denis Judd unravels the Mahatma myth

Rediscovering Gandhi by Yogesh Chada, Century, £20

The life of Mahatma Gandhi intrigued, baffled and inspired his contemporaries. Today it is not easier to arrive at the essential truth about a man whom the great radical journalist James Cameron called "one of the truly significant figures of the 20th century" and whom Winston Churchill sneeringly dismissed as "a half-naked fakir". Was he, as a police report concluded in 1915, simply "a psychological case", or a uniquely gifted politician whose consummate skills mobilised the Indian masses and tore the heart out of the British Raj?

Next week sees the 50th anniversary of the creation of India and Pakistan. In January 1998 it will be half a century since Gandhi's assassination. Given the current torrent of commemorative books and programmes, the publishers' claim that this is "the first major biography of Gandhi for over twenty years" is a touch too ambitious. Yogesh Chada has set out to reclaim Gandhi "as a human being out of the many myths surrounding him. He had his failings and his favourites, but to suppress these weaknesses would be to undermine his strengths".

The biography is very readable and, given the astounding complexity and range of Gandhi's activities, manageable and accessible. The quotations are



IMAGES OF INDIA

Search for identity: in the half-century since the sub-continent's independence, the practice of untouchability persists in subtle and crude forms, while many minorities continue to feel insecure

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEOFF PERRY

mostly well chosen, sometimes unfamiliar and rarely too long. Chada employs a commendable variety of views and interpretations, and seems genuinely to be striving to uncover the truth. The turning-points of Gandhi's career are convincingly explained. His principles, or possibly his eccentricities, are fairly scrutinised – including his renunciation of sexual relations with his wife.

On this issue, Chada quotes Gandhi's assertion that sexual intercourse was sinful save for procreation, and that abstinence had a higher purpose: "Without conquering lust, man cannot hope to rule over self, without rule over self there can be no *swaraj* (self-rule)". But he also reminds us of the more plausible theory that Gandhi's "attitude towards sex had emanated from the profound sense of guilt" he experienced as a result of making love with his wife rather than being with his father when he died.

There are failings in the book. The understanding of some of the imperial and British background is incomplete. The bibliography is brief, dated and omits some crucial works. The end-notes are unconventionally presented and hard to follow. Edwin Montagu, the reforming Secretary of State for India in the early 1920s, becomes "Montague" throughout. Gandhi's role in wrecking the draft constitution painfully negotiated in 1946 after the arrival of the British Cabinet Mission is seriously underestimated. The

chapter on the plot to kill Gandhi is enticingly entitled "A Permissive Assassination" but signal fails to deliver new information.

Despite these, and other, reservations, Chada's biography charts with some skill its subject's transformation from awkward, youthful mediocrity to political superstar. In many ways, Gandhi was good news for the Raj, despite his potential for mobilising the masses and his sheer cussedness.

Gandhi preached non-violent resistance, and not bloody revolution. He had a taste for parleying with viceroys rather than throwing bombs at them, and remained on good terms with almost all his chief British opponents – although the same could not be said about his relations with either the Muslim leader Jinnah or the pro-Japanese Subhas Bose.

Perhaps this is why his abrupt and shocking death moved so many to grief. Jan Smuts, for whom he astutely made a pair of sandals while imprisoned in South Africa for his civil rights campaign before the First World War, wrote "A prince among men has passed away". Mountbatten could be moved to tears at the recollection of his assassination, 25 years later. The veteran French socialist Leon Blum spoke for millions when he said: "I never saw Gandhi. I do not know his language. I never set foot in his country and yet I feel the same sorrow as if I have lost someone near and dear."

What grade does the free state deserve? A middle second class, says Bhikhu Parekh

The Idea of India by Sunil Khilnani, Hamish Hamilton, £17.99

Independent India's 50th anniversary offers a good opportunity to assess its achievements and failures. Its territorial integrity remains intact; unlike the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia it has defied all predictions about its disintegration. Democracy has struck roots; its brief suspension in the Seventies was decisively ended by a determined electorate. Liberalism, too, is deeply inscribed in India's major institutions, and the country remains firmly committed to individual rights.

It has so far elected two Muslim and one Sikh presidents, and has elected or appointed minority representatives to the most sensitive positions. After initial panic, the country has learnt to live with and even cherish its differences. Its cultural life displays remarkable vitality and its literary achievements have won international acclaim. When both the *New Yorker* and *Granta* devote special issues to English-language writing in India, Indians can rightly feel proud.

But India's failures are as depressing as its achievements are impressive. Nearly a third of its people live below the poverty line, and just over a third are illiterate. Although the hideous practice of untouchability was declared unlawful within two years of independence, it persists in subtle and crude forms. Some of India's minorities feel insecure, and fear the worst if the Hindu nationalists come to power – as seems increasingly likely.

Indian politics is heavily criminalised and thrives on corruption. The large middle class wallows in shallow consumerism and lacks a social conscience. India's higher education is in a shambles, and its creative output in philosophy and the social and natural sciences meagre. Its deeply colonised consciousness remains parasitic on the West. Overall, independent India's performance merits a middle second class.

How are India's successes and failures related, and how can they be explained? Sunil Khilnani's elegant and well-argued book addresses these and related questions. Although at places hurried and inconclusive, and somewhat over-committed to the modernist project, he tackles them with erudition and insight.

In Khilnani's view, India began well under its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that India needed a strong state both to hold the country together and to give it a coherent identity. He knew that the state had to be democratic, secular, culturally plural and committed to industrialisation. Accordingly he devoted his considerable energies to building

up state institutions, consolidating the Congress Party, successfully selling his pluralist vision to the masses, and giving the new state popular legitimacy.

For Khilnani, Indira Gandhi's long rule represented a change for the worse, though not without redeeming features. She split Congress, politicised state institutions, undermined federalism and revived religious and caste identities. Relying on crude populist appeals, she undermined the role of mediating institutions and equated democracy with simple majority rule. Her economic strategy was incoherent, weakly implemented and heavily mortgaged to the cause of her own survival.

However, Mrs Gandhi's populism had the ironic consequence of deepening democracy. Once people were told that they were the ultimate and unmediated source of power, they used it in every way they could to pursue their goals. For Khilnani, Mrs Gandhi's successors – including her son Rajiv – lacked even such vision as she had, and were largely content to stay in power by sectional appeals and devolving power to the regions. When the Indian economy became virtually bankrupt in the early 1990s, they turned to liberalisation as a panacea without much thought as to how it affected the poor and sucked the country into the global economy.

For Khilnani, unrestrained liberalisation, the rise of Hindu nationalism, pressures for a one-dimensional national identity and the failure to appreciate the centrality of the state constitute the major dangers facing the country today. He rightly suggests that the answer lies in a pluralist vision of India committed both to respect for its deep diversity and to coherent economic development.

Much of what Khilnani says is persuasive and deserves attention. I was disappointed that Nehru was not located in the modernist tradition, which had begun to develop from the early decades of the 19th-century onwards. As a result, he appears to come from nowhere and seems more original than he really was.

Although Khilnani is right to stress the importance of the state and democracy, he uncritically accepts the Western under-standing of them and misses the complex ways in which Indians have given them distinctly Indian forms. As for Hindu nationalism, its belated entry on the scene needs an historical context. For nearly 25 years, Nehru's secularism was a regnant doctrine. Neglected and despised visions of Indian identity predictably struck back at the first available opportunity, with a militancy that augurs ill for the country. If they are to be tamed, the Nehruvian vision needs to be broadened and deepened.

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Paperbacks



By Christopher Hirst & Emma Hagestad

The Orchard on Fire by Shena Mackay (Minerva, £5.99) Mackay evokes the smell of discarded Woodbines and old-fashioned lipstick with an elegiac sensuality usually reserved for nightingales and autumn mists. But this is no run of the mill celebration of Fifty's tat. Her portrait of a Kent village, and the growing friendship of two eight-year-old girls as they discover secret orchards, Lover's Lanes and dirty old men is laced with beady humour.

Alan Bennett in a manner of speaking by Daphne Turner (Faber, £9.99) You can see why Bennett wasn't keen on being the subject of a full-scale lit crit study. "We hear a great deal about flattery in the plays," comments Turner, before embarking on a po-faced analysis of the comic masterpiece *Forty Years On*. Her perceptions are keen-eyed and intelligent - "his plays are constantly interested in people who are trapped and caged" - but the ironic humour which is central to Bennett's oeuvre evaporates when placed under the critical microscope.

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding (Picador, £5.99) Fans of Bridget Jones's weekly diary in *The Independent* will be glad to find that one of the happier years in her life is now heading the paperback bestseller chart in novel form. Not that Bridget's metamorphosis from Home Alone singleton into the kind of woman men like to take on weekend mini-breaks happens overnight. Before she drives into the sunset with a nerd in a diamond-patterned sweater she has to get over her crush on Daniel Cleaver, the rogue male in the publishing house where she works. And lose half a stone before Christmas. And give up smoking.

Honey From a Weed by Patience Gray (Prospect, £12.99) Part memoir, part cook-book, this quirky classic is the fruit of a 30-year stint accompanying a sculptor around Italian and Greek marble quarries. No book plumbs deeper into the Mediterranean culinary tradition. Gray is wonderfully evocative about ingredients and techniques - though it is doubtful how many readers will try *Gummaridli* (young lamb's pluck cooked on the spit). In the section on lentils, the author finds room for a disquisition on farting in EngLit.

Jim Thompson: Omnibus 2 (Picador, £3.99) It would be hard to imagine a more pathetic bunch of low-lives than the inhabitants of Jim Thompson's Fifties paperbacks. His door-to-door salesmen, hotel bell-boys and punch-drunk boxers are looking for any action they can get, but don't know what to do when the great-looking "babe" finally arrives. While the first *Omnibus* contained Thompson's best-known novels, this volume makes available five more, including *Savage Night* and *A Hell of a Woman*. Noir at its darkest ... and dastard.

Graceland: going home with Elvis by Karal Ann Marling (Harvard, £9.95) In this brilliant, if highly personal, guide to both the man and his home, Marling explains how the Presley shrine differs from other places of tourist pilgrimage: "The house is full of things that we all have or used to have, or used to want, or hate." Though it is easy to scoff at Graceland's decor ("a violent Christmase-lipstick-cherry-coke-fire-engine-hellfire red") and the Polynesian-themed Jungle Den, Marling insists that Elvis was "the last great Dixie regionalist", on a par with William Faulkner.

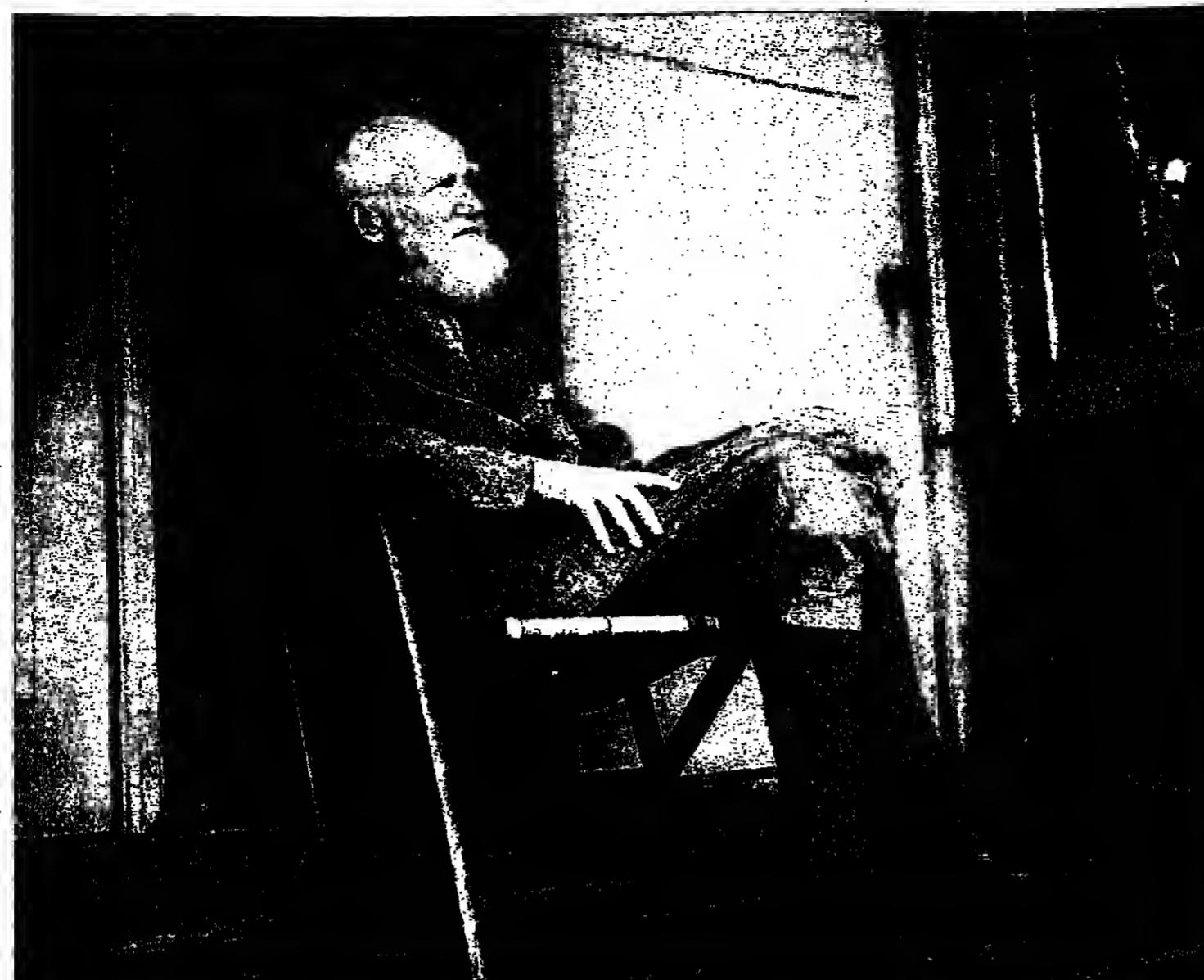
Audiobooks



Men in black are flavour of the month in spoken word releases. But you would be right in thinking that *Men in Black* (Hodder, 3hrs, £8.99), the audio novelisation of the box-office-breaking special effects movie, would be a waste of time. It is. Much better value, although similar in its lingering descriptions of zapping suspects to kingdom come, is *The Good Guys Wear Black* (Random House, 3hrs, £8.99). Written by Steve Collins about his experiences as a member of SOI9, the Met's Special Firearms Wing, it is read convincingly by Tim Piggott-Smith.

Christina Hardiment

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Knickerbocker glory: Shaw at rest and (below) at play

Man and superbore

Is the 'universal genius' worth reviving? Not bloody likely, argues John Campbell

Bernard Shaw: the one-volume definitive edition
by Michael Holroyd, Chatto & Windus, £25

plays. Many more, like *Fanny's First Play* or *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, have sunk without trace. But *Pygmalion* is doing the rounds again: there is a starry *Heartbreak House* on the way. *Mrs Warren's Profession* crops up quite regularly. *Saint Joan* is an enduring warhorse.

Yet these are period pieces, museum exhibits only, as the National Theatre's recent production of *The Devil's Disciple* cruelly proved. The fact is that you cannot do anything with a Shaw play except stage it. There is nothing between the lines, as there is in Ibsen or Chekhov. *Heartbreak House*, the shadowy adult man behind the mask, and "GBS" the celebrated pantaloons.

His solution is to split Shaw into three people.

"Sonny" is the insecure small boy in *Dulcinea*, uncertain of his parentage. He lacks his mother's love and grows up to seek a substitute in the world's applause and the chaste worship of a succession of strong women, mainly the actresses for whom he wrote his female roles. "Shaw" is the shadowy adult man behind the mask, and "GBS" the celebrated pantaloons.

This is clever but contrived. It leads Holroyd into complex constructions involving all three personae in a single sentence. He suggests that "the fastidious Shaw" was sometimes disgusted by "the gyrations GBS went through to gain public attention". But the mask was too firmly fixed; the clown's plea to be taken seriously was just part of the performance.

Holroyd tracks Shaw's - or is it Sonny's? - relations with women indefatigably. But GBS conducted his affairs behind such a smokescreen of ingenious verbosity, in desperation to keep sexuality at bay, that the reader loses patience. Better the healthy fornication of H G Wells.

As for Shaw's 45-year marriage to Charlotte Payne Townsend, he can shed little light on the inwardness of the partnership. It was a

mariage blanc, though that did not stop Charlotte being jealous of his actresses; she was his nursemaid

and mother-substitute who seems to have spent

most of her time trying to stop him working. In her

sixties, she found an unlikely confidant in T E Lawrence, to whom she bore her soul, we are told, more than ever to her husband. But the daily routine of their domestic life still comes across - as

GBS stage-managed it - as a Shavian farce.

The portrait only becomes human at the end, when the two old Shaws and the two old Webbs are increasingly drawn together as a quartet of dried up ancients, each longing to die before their partner. Shaw died last. On the page, as in life, death is a long time coming, and genuinely pathetic when it does. Yet Holroyd still gives GBS the last word: "Well, did I give a good performance?" He did; but it was only a performance.

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travel & outdoors



Point of views

As the British mainland's most westerly arm, Ardnamurchan is off the tourist map. But for those who make the journey, writes Steve Crawshaw, the peninsula's natural beauty is matched only by its tranquillity



Welcome to Britain. Now sod off." If, by some chance, you recognise that phrase, it is not because the British Tourist Authority has come up with a catchy new Liam Gallagher-style slogan to promote the UK. It is because I wrote it three years ago, when testing the welcome we offer to visitors. The location I chose was Gatwick airport, and the perception of most new arrivals endeavouring to travel to central London was summed up by a couple of Americans who said "We're used to this crap - we're from New York."

Britain's hole in its tourism account deepened this week, with the latest figures revealing a four per cent drop in both the number of visitors and the amount they spend. We spend far more on holidays abroad than we receive from overseas visitors to the UK - a deficit of about £10m a day. The last government chose an unusual way to try to promote tourism

in Britain: cutting funding for the BTA, which seeks to entice visitors to the UK.

Under the new government, an equally perverse course has been chosen: closing down the tourist information centre at Gatwick airport. From the end of September, Britain's second busiest gateway will become even less welcoming to overseas visitors.

The closure of the bureau speaks volumes about the muddle surrounding tourism promotion in Britain. Tom Clarke, the minister responsible for tourism, did not take the decision to shut the office himself. Neither did the BTA. "It wasn't our decision," says the English Tourist Board. Gatwick airport itself was not responsible; indeed, the airport provides the site free. Finally, I tracked down the man who pulled the plug: Fred Cubbage, leader of a shadowy group in Tunbridge Wells called the South East England Tourism Board.

Mr Cubbage turns out to be a reasonable man. He says his decision was taken "with the utmost regret", but says his organisation could not afford to meet the £1,000-a-week cost of the service. And, with fewer than one in 10 inquiries at Gatwick about the patch he covers, why should he blow his budget on the bureau?

The job of the SEETB - slogan, "England's warmest welcome" - is to promote Kent, Surrey and Sussex to extol the virtues of East Grinstead and West Hoathly rather than to help people who want to find a train to Torquay or a B&B in Bridlington. Now the four staff at the airport are to lose their jobs, and new arrivals are to lose the chance of help and guidance. The task of running it, says Mr Cubbage, became "more onerous because of the reduction of central funding". So having followed the trail all the way down to a side street in Tunbridge Wells, it now seems to be leading back to Whitehall and the desk of Mr



Finding the number of the Dept of Culture, Media and Sport included the comment: 'Oh, culture. I thought you said torture'

Clarke, the tourism minister. A spokeswoman for his office says: "Choices have to be made about the allocation of resources, and this bureau does not represent an efficient use of resources, so unfortunately it has to close." Countries such as France, Holland and Spain, which offer excellent tourist information bureaux for arriving passengers, must be delighted.

Should you feel strongly enough to complain to the minister about the closure, don't call directory inquiries. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which covers tourism, is unknown to British Telecom. My quest to find the number included the priceless comment: "Oh, culture. I thought you said torture."

After supervisors and managers joined the operator in trying vainly to find the number of the government ministry, BT gave up. By other, more devious means, I discovered the ex-directory number to dial: 0171-211 6000.

PENINSULA PATHS

I seemed that Scottish holidays and I were not destined to be a happy match. Six years ago, what promised to be a blissful fortnight on the island of Arran was interrupted on the second day by the radio headlines, which woke us with annoyingly dramatic news. "The Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, has been overthrown in a coup," I heard through my half-sleep. I was responsible for *The Independent's* coverage of Russia at the time. I told myself for as long as I could that it was probably just a dream. Eventually, however, I was forced to confront reality. By the time I stumbled downstairs, a message was lying on the kitchen table. "Please phone office urgently." Arran, it was nice to know you.

This time, the planned Scottish holiday began with almost equally daunting omens. I fractured my skull just 10 days before the holiday began. When we embarked on the journey, I was still suffering from a constant headache like a bad hangover. I did not, to be blunt, expect it to be much of a holiday. But then, I had reckoned without Ardnamurchan.

If you have not heard of Ardnamurchan, join the large club. The peninsula does not enjoy (or suffer from) the high profile of many of the Scottish islands and large chunk of the Scottish mainland. Some of its distinguishing points are mere curiosities. It is the westernmost point of the British mainland - 20 miles further west than Land's End. It is geologically renowned: one village is sited on a solidified mass of liquid lava, inside the giant "ring-dyke" amphitheatre of an extinct volcano. There is an abundance of prehistoric standing stones and the like.

Above all, though, it is the spirit of Ardnamurchan that keeps the devotees enthusiastic. The poet Alasdair Maclean (no relation to Mr *Guns of Navarone*) brought a small dose of not-quite-fame with his *Night Falls on Ardnamurchan*. "I have always looked on the ferry that crosses the Narrows of the Linne Loch at Corran [from the mainland to the Ardnamurchan peninsula] as a kind of mobile decompression chamber," he wrote, "where various kinds of pollution were drained from the blood and I was filled to breathe pure air again."

Even the first-time visitor is touched by something of this. After crossing from the mainland, south of Fort William, the single-track road winds its way through the woods that line the shore of Loch Sunart, with views alternately cosy and grand. Moorland and woodland, mountain

and seashore, and an astonishing variety of flowers, animals and birds. And almost no people.

Outsiders have sometimes played a disproportionately important (and rarely benevolent) role, in the peninsula's fate. Alan Clark, he of the coven and irreverent *Diaries*, boasts that his family once owned the entire peninsula - among many other properties, you understand: "A pheasant shoot in Suffolk, a house in Berkeley Square, a villa at Cap d'Antibes on the Riviera, and the whole of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, some 330,000 acres in Argyll." Even today, the legacy of the big old landowners is much resented. The 19th-century clearances - when crofters were evicted from their homes with a determination that would have impressed Radovan Karadzic - affected Ardnamurchan as badly as anywhere in the Highlands.

And yet, despite the bitter history and the abandoned hamlets hauntingly scattered across the peninsula, today the visitor feels only a relaxed tranquillity. Tobermory, on Mull, is just half an hour by ferry across from Kilchoan. By ordinary standards, it is an idyllic, quiet little fishing port. By comparison with Ardnamurchan, Tobermory seems infested with crowds.

You can walk for miles at a time, even in mid-

Strontian, just before you reach the Ardnamurchan, costs between £69.50 and £85 per person per night, including a four-course evening meal. For self-catering accommodation, Steading Holidays (01972 510262) has properties throughout the peninsula and Ardnamurchan Estate (01972 510268) has a number of properties for rent.

A full list of accommodation and an information leaflet is available from the Kilchoan Tourist Information Centre (open Easter to October, 01972 510222) or the Information centre in Fort William (open all year, 01397 703761).

Reading
Exploring Sunart, Ardnamurchan, Moidart and Morar (Harlequin Press); *Alasdair Maclean, Night Falls on Ardnamurchan* (Penguin); *John Prebble, The Highland Clearance* (Penguin).

summer, and hardly meet a soul. Ten-year-old Anie and her friend Dunya fell in love with beaches like the white shell-sands at Sanna, where they could swim, build sandcastles, and explore the rockpools at the foot of heather-covered hills while we watched the orange-beaked oystercatchers beating their way to and from their liquid bubbling cries. If you're lucky, you might see otters, which are common (the peninsula is just down the coast from where Gavin Maxwell lived when he wrote *Ring of Bright Water*). Or, like us, you can get disengaged by a fearless mink, or stumble across a fearsome wildcat. On the quiet waters of Loch Sunart, where we went mackerel fishing, we

Despite Ardnamurchan's bitter history, today the peninsula is a tranquil haven for the few people who visit

PHOTOGRAPH: ANGUS JOHNSON

STILL MOVING PICTURES

watched seals play and tease each other splashing on and off rocks a few feet from the boat.

The walks here are no less dramatic for being undemanding. You can stroll along the old crofters' path from Oickle or Kintyre Bay to the "singing sands" - squeaky underfoot, hence the name - of Gortenfearn. On the way, we stopped for picnics beside mountain streams, hidden in the bracken and heather, with spectacular views across to Skye.

Obtaining reliable information for local walks can be difficult. A brochure (*Exploring Ardnamurchan*) claims to give all necessary information. In reality, you will have to hope for extra guidance from locals or from the Ordnance Survey. Sometimes the maps help; sometimes they don't. Thus, there is a more or less easy path up Ben Hiant, the Holy Mountain. The path, beginning on the mountain's eastern side, is well known - but not marked on the maps. From the summit, there are commanding views east along Loch Sunart, south down the Sound of Mull, and north and west past the Egyptian-style lighthouse at Ardnamurchan Point to the distant outline of the Cuillins on Skye. The red deer all around are disturbed by nothing and nobody except that familiar feature of all Britain's wildest places - the occasional, deafening roar of a low-flying RAF plane.

Ardnamurchan isn't the place for those who want to conquer impressive-sounding peaks. It has not a single Munro - nor, by the same token, any crowds of Munro-baggers. Its only selling point is its sheer natural beauty. If you go there with skull intact, it might even be better than it seemed to the visitor with a cracked head.



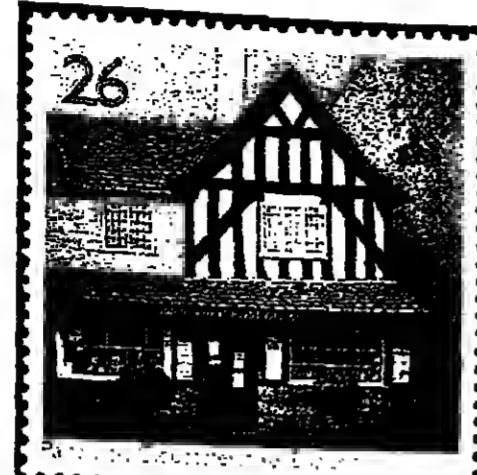
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First class: Painswick Post Office, right, will become the most ticked building in Britain when the stamp, below, is issued this week
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER JONES



Not just a pretty face, Painswick Post Office earns its stamp of approval, writes Simon Calder



Philately gets you everywhere

Among main roads, the A46 is a heavyweight; it begins in the city of Bath and bisects Britain on a long, winding course to Grimsby. But its finest moment occurs in a corner of the Cotswolds, when it assumes the identity of New Street, Painswick.

If you are not familiar with the crumbly old village of 3,000 souls, assess this stamp of approval for Painswick: "One of the pleasantest places in the world". That wasn't the lady who runs the tourist desk in the village library – it was George III, who was especially fond of the Cotswold stone quarried hereabouts.

In the 200 years since he said that, the raw, rough rock that is Painswick's motif has mellowed to the texture of icing on a sponge, spooned on and baked to the shade of honey. Posing cutely on a curving hillside, Painswick meets all the criteria for an archetypal Cotswold village. Yet it possesses qualities well beyond the merely picturesque.

That odd-house-out on New Street, for a start.

By the year 1478, the local squire Pain Fitzjohn had already donated his name to the village, before falling

in battle against the Welsh. Columbus had yet to venture to the Americas, and the postcode "GL6 0XH" was still 500 years away from being coined. But in that year the bold, half-timbered Westhaven House took shape. The first-class residence is now better known as Painswick Post Office, and celebrated on a stamp issued this week. The honour was bestowed because it is England's first post office, in the sense that it occupies an older building than any other.

Like the postcode, the new stamp (above, left) rarely does the place justice. The real thing (above, right) is much less orderly than its depiction, with overflowing window boxes spilling scarlet, white and purple blooms from beneath prim white frames. Above the porch, blackened beams writh beneath the weight of the roof and the years. Sharp angles with a hint of wigwam about them hoist the eye upwards to the Norwich Union firemark on the broadest cross-beam. In the days before Postman Pat and Fireman Sam were public concerns, these devices indicated which buildings were worth saving.

Inside, the shop is a pleasing muddle of stonework, stationery and sweets. A giant version of the new stamp takes pride of place, with a note that the Royal Mail will be visiting next Tuesday in order to process first-day covers. This week is one for the album in Painswick: the village festival takes place today and tomorrow.

The next attraction to get sorted in Painswick is the fairest church yard in the Cotswolds. The sheep which speckled the hillsides of Gloucestershire produced the finest English wool, which for a few centuries made Painswick's wool merchants among the wealthiest people in Britain. They ensured their interment was of the highest calibre by commissioning increasingly elaborate (and competitive) memorials in the grassy acre surrounding St Mary's Church.

A nestled cottage totters above the lych gate into the churchyard. Bowing to pass beneath it, you emerge amid a rural jostle. One component is a forest of masonry, resembling a haul of treasure chests spattered with a few stray pyramids. The other competitor is a consortium of yew trees precisely 99 of them, standing in neat ranks but

occasionally melting into each other to form voluminous barricades of the deepest green, separating the tombs of local grandees such as William Hogg, a Gratituous Preacher who died in 1800. "It is incredible the sums of money he expended in charity", asserts his headstone.

Despite the decline in wool, money has not forsaken Painswick altogether. Any cyclist feels intimidated by kerb-to-kerb Rovers, of the Land and Range varieties. The price tags at the Fiery Beacon art gallery address themselves to the sorts of well-heeled folk who dine at the County Elephant, next to the post office. But the latest addition to the catering repertoire, Bertram's ("a café with rooms" across from the church) charged me only a fiver for a chicken baguette that seemed to contain an entire bird, accompanied by a wheelbarrow's worth of chips and a gallon of tea.

Even allowing for refined good looks befitting an English rose, the village sustains an improbable range of restaurants and tea rooms. The reason Painswick appears on so many mental maps lies hidden a little to the north, around Buenos Aires.

This, as you may gauge from the spelling, is not the Argentinian capital. It is the name chosen for what is now Painswick House by its creator, Charles Hyett, who moved here for the "good air". What could be just another pretentious pile belonging to the minor aristocracy transformed by the grounds around it. During the brief English flowering of Rococo in the 1740s, Mr Hyett imported the asymmetric aspirations of the European movement and planted them in his garden. The curves of paths and pools are assigned into a swooping gully, with the only flat patch devoted to a bowling green. Odd little outbuildings pop up, mimicking the Orient: they serve as eccentricities around which the visitor swirls. After a couple of hours in this most verdant of follies, you need another cup of tea.

Across from the churchyard, the village cascades towards the Painswick Valley, which proceeds to an entrancingly pretty fashion towards Stroud. You tottle down Stepping Stone Lane and clamber up the other side to the Painswick Old Road, clinging like a contour high above the valley. This used to

be a Via Regia, a royal way. Last Wednesday, as bees idly batted from one flower to the next, and the heavy summer air whispered through overgrown grass, you could find yourself in complete agreement with George III. Yet Prince Charles, a resident of nearby Highgrove, could be drawn into a battle to preserve his ancestor's vision. The local council wants to spruce more than a thousand new homes along the valley. As Duff Hart-Davis has reported in these pages, plans for the development are alarmingly advanced.

In Stroud, you re-join the A46 and re-enter the real world: one in which the town's stout redbrick Post Office has been closed down. Plainly, it wasn't pretty enough.

Rising novelist Stephen Blanchard (author of *Gag and I*, and *Wilson's Island*) works in a Clapham sorting office in South East London. "It provides me with a routine, purpose and gives me time to write. I'm quite good at it, too," he says.

Frank McCourt won this year's Pulitzer prize for his childhood memoirs *Angela's Ashes*. Towards the end of the book he records his experiences as a Limerick telegram boy in the Forties – a job that ultimately enabled him to escape an existence of relentless poverty in Ireland and start a new life in the States.

Post yourself around the world

Simon Calder reveals one way of pushing the envelope of your global horizons

Every traveller begins to explore the world with a trip to the post office, and these hubs of communication keep cropping up along the way. You collect the form for your first passport from your local one, and thereafter post offices remain hugely important.

Like railway stations and frontier posts,

post offices comprise a necessary part of any journey. And whether you pop in to buy a postcard stamp, or stand in line for hours while you wait for your chance to find that no one has bothered to send you a postcard, some are attractions in their own right.

Dublin

That jaunty little figure, frozen in the act of wheeling from Earl Street North into O'Connell Street, is James Joyce. The author's statue stands just across the road from the symbolic heart of Irish nationalism: the General Post Office. Around 1816, when the stout Doric columns were hoisted from the drudge of what was then Sackville Street, Dublin was just another British provincial city. A century later, in the Easter Rising of 1916, the proclamation of the Republic of Ireland was read from the steps of the well-proportioned neoclassical facade.

The interior was wrecked in the subsequent siege. Today, it comfortably combines the status of nationalist icon and purveyor of postal products. The nation's largest tricolour flutters above it, splashing green, orange and white into the sky above the street which has since taken the name of the liberation hero Daniel O'Connell.

Washington DC

The American capital is home to two fine ex-post offices, each of them a fully fledged tourist attraction – and, like most things in Washington, offering free admission.

The Old Post Office presides over Pennsylvania Avenue, a 399ft granite fortress whose innards have been scooped out and replaced with a vast, airy atrium and a dozen places to eat, including Chinese, Indian and Japanese. The building is in the care of the

National Parks Service, and a be-stressed ranger will take you in the glass-sided, vertigo-pumping lift to the belltower at the top, for the second-best vista in Washington (the first being from the slender needle of the Washington Monument, piercing the western sky).

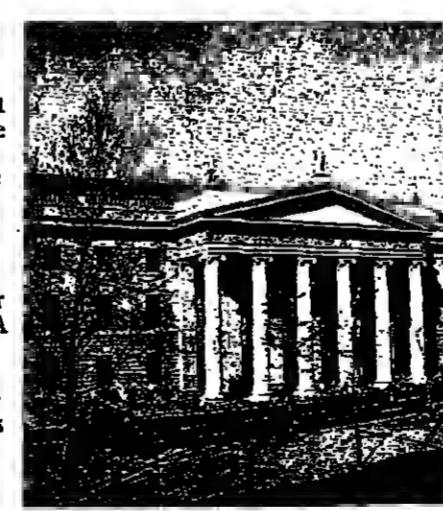
Look in the opposite direction and you see an overbearing hunk of a building perched beside Union Station. This Beaux Arts palace took over from the Old Post Office as the capital's main mailroom, but itself fell victim to federal budget cuts and the notion that

Americans did not need to send letters in style. After many years of abandonment, it has now re-opened as the latest addition to the Smithsonian repertoire of museums.

The National Postal Museum traces, with a degree of levity, the tale of the US Mail from Pony Express to automated sorting. But as the hands-on computer prints out your pre-addressed postcards, you can't help thinking that while the 20th century was the preserve of the post, electronic communications in the 21st century will consign mail to the museum permanently.

Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Until 1975, the staff at the US Embassy in Saigon had it easy. They could just nip two blocks south to South Vietnam's finest post office, which stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the city's cathedral. Unlike the Embassy (a concrete jumble of defences, abandoned on the last day of April 1975) and South Vietnam (ditto), the Post Office is thriving. The French took control of Saigon in 1861 and the post office shows the regime at its prime, a Poste that would not look out of place in Lyon. Inside, a map of "Indochine" shows how the old colonial order held sway over the entire region. Dominating every transaction these days, however, is a huge, beaming portrait of Ho Chi Minh.



Dublin Post Office PHOTOGRAPH: MAXWELLS

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Bright lights, big city

It used to be dominated by unflappable fleets of cyclists. Now the multi-lane highway – and the Big Mac – have come to Shanghai, writes

Patrick Conner

In its great old days, when the lavatories were imported from Britain and Noel Coward was in residence, the Peace Hotel in Shanghai was the last word in cosmopolitan sparkle. Now in the gloomy foyer there stands a Multi-media Information Kiosk. At the touch of a button we learn that, in Coward's day, the hotel was called the *Cathy* – or, as the Kiosk endearingly describes it, the *Cathy* – and that it was once voted "most famous hotel in the world".

Yet nostalgia cuts little ice in modern Shanghai. Like the other pre-war hotels of the city – the Park, which was the tallest building in the Far East, and the grandly porticoed Pacific – the Peace Hotel has been overtaken in the race to attract the new upmarket business clientele. The Shanghai have always regarded themselves as a cut above other Chinese in style and the ability to make money. When they look at the rapid rise of Hong Kong, they attribute it not so much to Western savvy as to the enterprise of the many Chinese who came from Shanghai to Hong Kong after 1949, and who in several cases created colossal fortunes. Now that Hong Kong has been placed on a (nearly) equal footing with the rest of China, will not Shanghai soon rival, and indeed eclipse, the former British colony?

This question has been much debated recently in the Hong Kong press, and it springs to mind again as one looks from the Peace Hotel's once-glittering dining room at the new Shanghai across the Huangpu River. The last time I sat here, seven years ago, the eastern district of Pudong was a nondescript suburb; now its Oriental Pearl TV Tower dominates the city, and around it have sprouted a group of spectacular buildings which resemble the dust-jacket of a sci-fi novel.

The Peace Hotel stands on the Bund, the long, curving embankment that was first developed by the British in the middle of the 19th century. Shanghai is not ashamed of its semi-colonial past. It has preserved the imposing bank and hotel buildings along the Bund; these great grey relics, built in styles varying from Harrods Baroque to orientalised Deco, have been designated historic monuments; and the British-looking bronze lions which once guarded the entrance to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank may now be admired in the Shanghai Museum of History.

Yet even the Bund has had to change. The quayside itself has recently been raised to form a pedestrian walkway, while the road along the Bund has become a 12-lane highway. At the northern end the road is about to sweep up over the old French settlement, to be linked with a concrete network of overhead highways, in an attempt to ease the city's monstrous congestion.

In every sense, cars are in the ascendant. Private vehicles are still scarce, but the streets are now ruled by taxis. Formerly the balance of power lay with armies of cyclists, who, after a volley of blasts from a driver's horn, might change direction by a few degrees, like a lake ruffled by a gentle breeze. Yet now the taxi driver may accelerate directly towards an oncoming column

of cyclists, scattering them to right and left.

There isn't much that you can't buy in Shanghai. On Fangbang Street in the old city you can pick up aged eggs, skinned ducks and lop-eared puppies. My own most satisfying purchase, for about £1, was a foldaway battery-driven potato-peeler. I feel confident that back home in Herne Hill, this gadget will place us at the cutting edge of culinary style.

The Bond Street of Shanghai is Nanjing Dong Lu (once known Bubbling Well Road), where, it is said, the traffic has only once been halted – for the shooting of Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun*. The ground floor of the old East Asia Hotel is now a clothing store: the mannequins are Western, with sharp noses and blond hair, although, less predictably, the lips of the male mannequins are purple. A few yards down, a fine old Sino-classical building with giant columns is shared by McDonald's and Pizza Hut.

But it's not all burgers and fizzy pop. Culture is alive and well, both Chinese and Western. "Shanghai Spring" was the title of the May music festival, with events ranging from a piano recital in honour of Beethoven, to *Let's Pull Together* by the Hangzhou Comedy Troupe. In the middle of

People's Square stands the city's great showpiece, the new Shanghai Museum. In front of it, elderly couples waltz beside fountains flanked by ceremonial bronze urns; as the visitor approaches, he or she becomes aware of a mellow rendering of "The Blue Danube" issuing from the depths of the urns.

Thus soothed, you enter the museum. The new displays are truly splendid – informative, varied, stimulating. I was privileged to eat lunch in the museum staff canteen: copious quantities of soup, rice, scrambled egg and salty meat. Despite being the only Westerner there, I scarcely received a second glance from the staff (the Shanghai have no doubt seen more than enough Westerners during the last 150 years), although I think my elderly briefcase attracted one or two pitying stares.

If the new museum is a haven of tranquillity, elsewhere one is constantly reminded that Shanghai contains 13 million people in an area appreciably smaller than London. The traditional gardens of Yu Yuan must be the most crowded gardens on earth; the pavilions have names like "Hall of Peaceful Contemplation", but there's not much chance of that. The antique market outside the old city is a good deal more relaxing. Here I nearly bought a stylish pair of 1940-vintage Chinese spectacles; Qing Dynasty, the stallholder assured me.

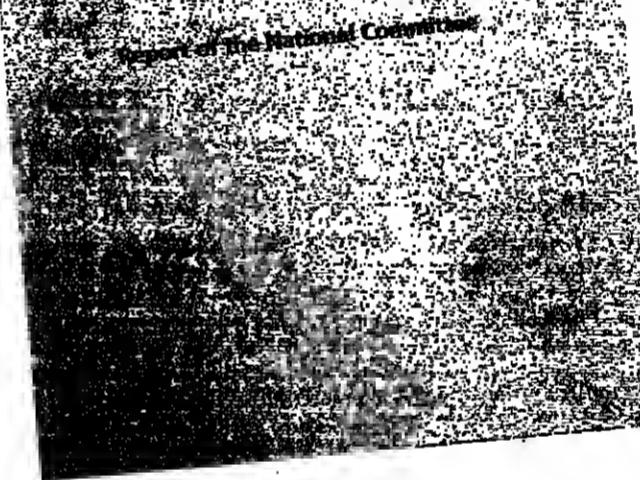
If anyone doubts the Shanghai's awareness of the outside world, they have only to watch the giant video screen in People's Square. As night fell, I watched as Clinton and various Chinese leaders came and went, each of them 50ft tall and portrayed in vivid hyper-colour. I lingered in case of a glimpse of British leaders. My patience was finally rewarded by a newsflash from Manchester. No politicians were in view, however; it was the final of the world table-tennis championship. The winner, of course, was China.

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Will Shanghai become the new Hong Kong? The Pudong district, left, and the Pearl TV tower, bottom left
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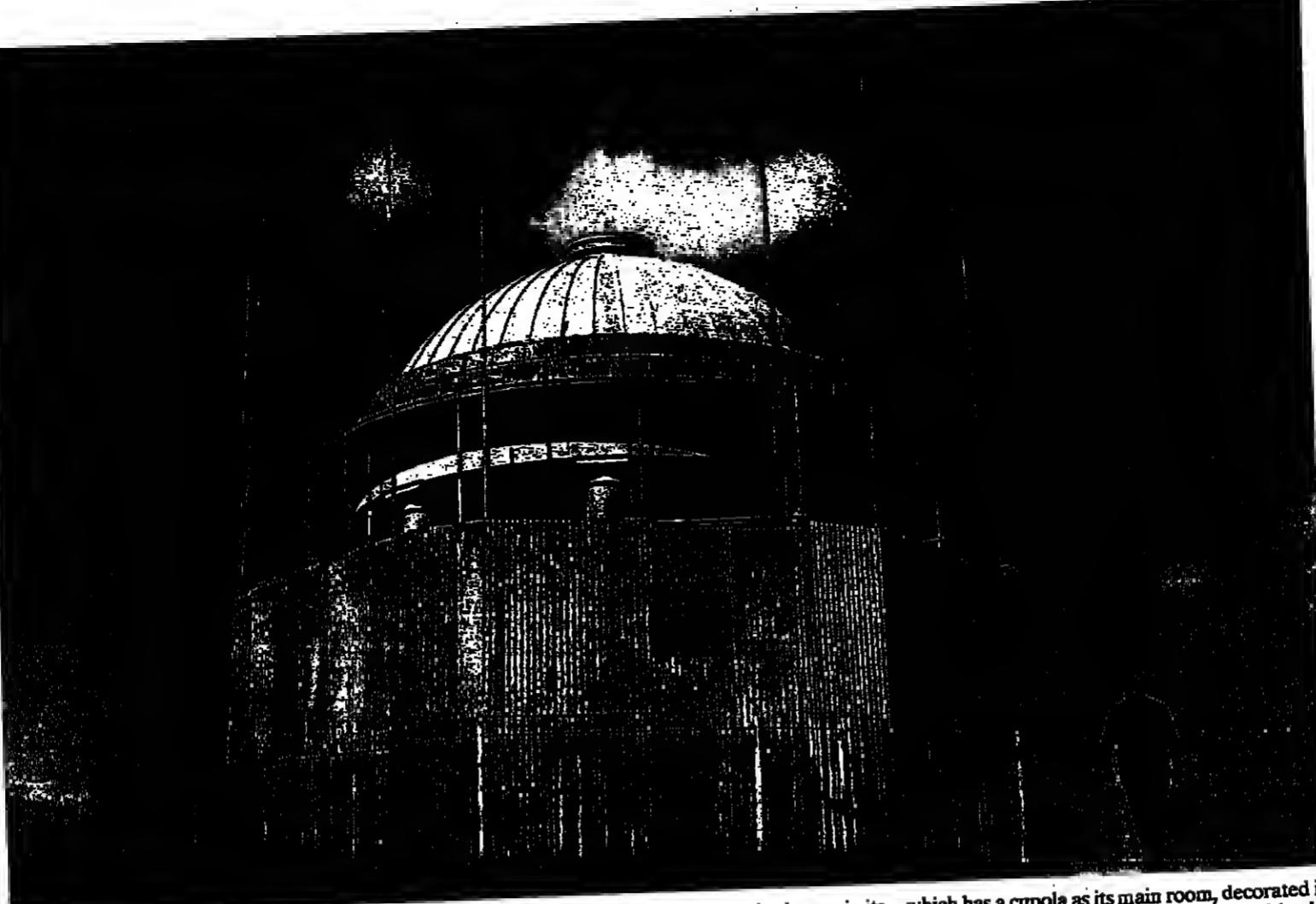
Haven on earth

Jack O'Sullivan discovers how Britain's urban parks are being rescued from dereliction

The Temple, a sandstone Georgian folly once visited by Wellington, Disraeli and General Tom Thumb, is a grand romantic gesture. Perched on the highest point of the 640-acre Heaton Park, one of Europe's largest urban public spaces, it looks down over central Manchester and speaks of gentler times. But the view has changed since the park was the pride and joy of Mancunians. The park's centrepiece, Heaton Hall, built in 1772 for the Earls of Wilton and one of the finest examples of a Wyatt country house, is boarded up. Two huge lions, cast in lead by John Cheere, which once adorned the entrance and fascinated generations of children, have been removed to protect them from further vandalism. Other buildings are derelict, no-go areas to the Pennines?

It's a familiar story – a great urban park, hard won by the Victorians, let to ruin by their great-grandchildren. We didn't notice until it was almost too late to save places which, in their heyday, were where many people spent their summer holidays.

Typically, decline in parks like this one dates from the Second World War, when the cast-iron railings were sacrificed to the war effort; parks could no longer be secured at night. After the war, planners were more interested in spending on slum clearance and new roads. Le Corbusier's



Modernism was not interested in ornate, decorated landscapes. While rural areas enjoyed the protection of the Countryside Commission, urban spaces were abandoned to blighted obscurity. After all, why bother with Heaton Park on the north side of Manchester, when you could drive to the Pennines?

Then parks' departments disappeared into council "Leisure Services", their horticultural expertise and political clout lost, leaving the parks starved of funding as sports centres got the cash.

Abolition of park-keepers, victims of compulsory competitive tendering, was an almost fatal blow. They were replaced by unaccountable outside contractors, charged with mowing the grass once a fortnight and dumping wood chippings around the roses. Municipal neglect was matched by

vandalism, which, once left unrepaired, grew in its destructiveness.

For Hazel Conway, author of three books on Britain's urban parks, the decline of the People's Park in Halifax symbolised the tragedy. "A whole row of statues on the terrace had to be enclosed in hardboard to prevent them being vandalised. Yet, even then, they were still damaged." For the general public, the murder of Rachel Nickell on Wimbledon Common evoked a sense that many parks were no longer safe.

But this dismal tale is drawing to a close. We are witnessing a great revival of the British urban park. The Temple at Heaton Park has been carefully restored, its stone interior marble fireplace and simple oak floor once more a resting place for walkers, not simply winos. The outside of the Hall,

which has a cupola as its main room, decorated in Etruscan style, will soon be renovated. Inside, the British Folk Art exhibition is already on display. The elegant Orangery, until recently a shabby shell of its former glory, is now a restaurant, catering for weddings. A new pavilion has been built for the golf course. A kitchen garden has been developed, and an aromatic garden for the blind is planned. Derelict buildings are due for demolition. The park is now locked at night and hundreds of new litter bins are regularly emptied. The greens at Heaton Park will host the lawn bowls competitions for the Commonwealth Games in 2000.

Two factors explain the turnaround – £3m allocated from the National Lottery (plus matching council funding) and the appointment of a park manager, Theresa Grant, a tough-minded Irish

woman, is now in charge at Heaton Park, given responsibilities previously divided between several council departments but assigned to no-one in particular. "There is an enormous amount of goodwill to parks," she says, "which I can focus. The fact that I am here, for example, means that when the contractors come to mow a section of the park, they don't cut the meadow while the wild orchids are flowering."

"I have also been able to make sure that when trenches are being dug in the park for the introduction of closed-circuit television, we will not have to go through the same disruption again. Water mains, fibre-optic cables and electricity cables will all be in the same trench for future use."

Ms Grant has changed the rota for cleaning and litter picking so that most work is done in the evening, making the park safer and ensuring that it is clean each morning. "If the public see it litter-free when they arrive, they are more likely to be tidy themselves." Soon the lions will return, once proper security has been introduced.

This is just the beginning for Dr Stewart Hardinge, team leader of the Urban Parks Programme for the Heritage and Lottery Fund, which is inviting bids from 2,500 parks. Some £70m has already been allocated and a similar amount will soon be available. He would like to see an Urban Green Agency established and made responsible for town parks, each with a manager like Theresa Grant. "For too long," he says, "parks have been seen as a problem, rather than being recognised as a vital component of an urban area. We will soon see them again, as the Victorians did, as the jewel in the crown of every town."

Refuge of pirates and puffins

Lundy is an elusive island floating tantalisingly off the north coast of Devon. A former refuge of rebels, pirates and smugglers, it lies below the Bristol Channel, its western shore pummeled by the Atlantic.

At Bideford I set sail on the charming 1950s MS Oldenburg for the 23-mile voyage to the island, which I had last seen earlier in the summer shimmering in a violet heat-haze.

Today was different. The wind was gusting a brisk damp south-westerly as we clogged down the river Tawridge from Bideford. Once out to sea the ship developed an idiosyncratic roll-and-shudder movement soon imitated by some of the 260 passengers. Kindly and efficient crew members banded out paper bags and napkins then wrapped the most queasy passengers in fluffy blankets and stowed them gently down below. Someone told me it wasn't always down – this was her 13th trip to Lundy.

Enormous basking sharks began to accompany us, slurping plankton, and I was glad not to be one of the many passengers with Martian complexions leaping precariously over the ship's rail.

After three hours the island appeared, weighed down by sea mist. Lundy's landing place on the sheltered eastern shore by Rat Island (last refuge of the British black rat) is only accessible by small craft. Curious seals bobbed out of the water as we disembarked by launch and rubber dinghy.

The beaving sea trip meant that time

on dry land before the return journey was limited. On the slaty beach I headed right, up a steep path underneath dark cliffs held in place (hopefully) with giant metal pins, and bordered by hairy Lundy cabbage.

Using my newly acquired rolling sea-gait, I soon passed Millcombe House. Built with Jamaican sugar money in 1835 for the pious Heaven family, its roof, sloping inward to catch precious rainwater, is an early example of ecological soundness. This house, like 22 other properties on Lundy (including one lighthouse) is maintained and administered by the Landmark Trust, and can be rented from them.

I followed the track to the village curving up to the left. A sharp left takes you to the 13th-century Marisco Castle, built as a fortress by Henry III after he had executed the rebellious William de Marisco who used Lundy as his hideaway.

I continued past the Victorian Gothic church of St Helena's on the left, walking across turf that was curiously brown. That, and my nautical gait, was having a strange effect on my progress.

Domed structures loomed out of the mist swirling in a field on my left.

Disappointingly, what I had hoped was a Celtic encampment in a time-warp turned out to be the Tent Field. The

Unless it's foggy.

Further on the left is a farm on whose land two giant skeletons (over 8ft long) were discovered in the 1850s, hidden under granite and slate slabs. Over to the west is the Old Light, a sturdy lighthouse designed by Daniel Alexander, architect of Dartmoor prison. Built in 1820, it is now divided into flats for visitors, and has an uninterrupted view of the Atlantic.

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On the right is a farm on whose land two giant skeletons (over 8ft long) were discovered in the 1850s, hidden under granite and slate slabs. Over to the west is the Old Light, a sturdy lighthouse designed by Daniel Alexander, architect of Dartmoor prison. Built in 1820, it is now divided into flats for visitors, and has an uninterrupted view of the Atlantic.

Once you have seen peacocks in their natural state, you cannot contemplate incarcerating them in any form of cage, however large. Nor can you pin them to stop them flying, because they must roost aloft to be safe from foxes. Essentially birds of the jungle, they need a tremendous amount of space to flourish; and if they are allowed to roost free in any village, they are bound to cause intense vexation.

A long-term peacock-owner myself, I know how the sufferers feel; and experience has taught me that it is unfair all round to keep such large birds, which are only half-domesticated, in any environment shared by humans.

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It was trips to India and Nepal that encouraged us to take on peacocks. I shall never forget an afternoon spent darting rhinos in the Terai, the plain south of the Himalayas. As our elephants crunched through the scrub, huge birds exploded in bomb-bursts of five or six, climbing steeply against the

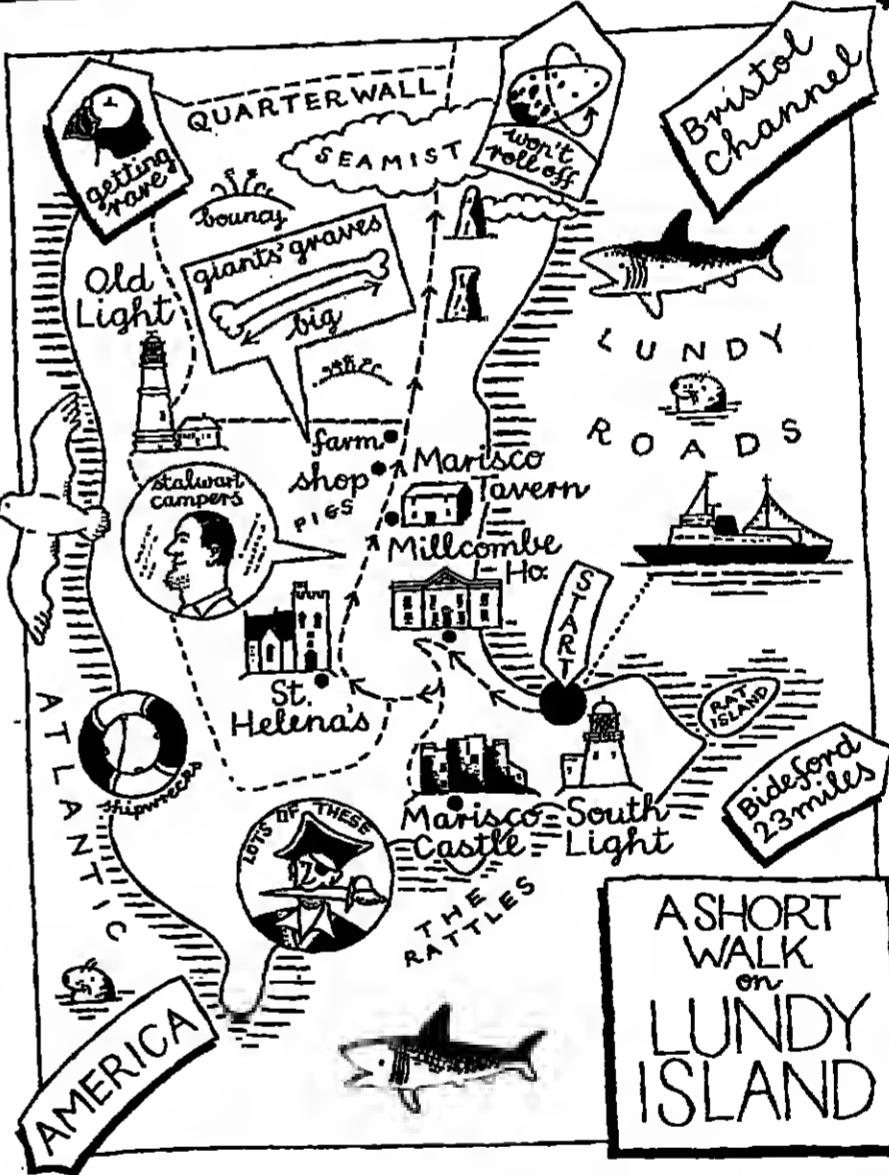
The South Light fog-warning bell sounded mournfully as I continued north. On my right were man-sized marker stones shawled with mist. Beyond them were the watery Lundy Roads, a safe haven for ships trying to shelter from the prevailing westerly winds.

The Oldenburg would soon be setting off for the mainland, so I headed back. Given a little more time, however, you can complete the circular walk – Lundy is only three miles long and half a mile wide. I must have walked a little under two miles but I had no realistic sense of scale, and time had passed far too quickly. I knew I would have to come back to this intriguing island.

Eventually I joined other passengers, their cheeks now healthily flushed, streaming back to the landing bay. Below us was the Oldenburg floating on a calmer sea, ready to sail with the tide.

Directions
Once on the island take the path to the right, pass Millcombe House and follow track to left and right again. St Helena's church is on left. Follow track through village and head north towards Quarter Wall.

The MS Oldenburg sails from Bideford or Ilfracombe in Devon. Lundy maps and information (and puffin stamps) are available on board. The boat leaves with the morning tide, returning with the evening tide. Prices: adults £24, children £12 for the round trip. Sailing information 01237 470422.



dazzling white backdrop of eternal snow peaks on the northern horizon.

In England, our first three birds were two hens and a male whom my wife named Shalimar. We were then living in the Chilterns, and the farm was so isolated that there was nobody in earshot to be tormented by the brazen screeches of "Ay-ORRR, Ay-ORRR" which Shalimar continually trumpeted out in spring.

We ourselves suffered most from free-lance avian gardening. Pacing the flowerbeds, endlessly inquisitive, the peacocks would nip off bud after bud, eating some but dropping most of them disdainfully in the ground. Whenever they decided to take a dust-bath in the vegetable patch, it was curtains for whole crops, young or old.

Mercifully perhaps, our flock never increased much. The hens nested in the nettles behind the farmyard, but cats or foxes got most of the chicks, and Shalimar – driven, no doubt, by the instinct to preserve his personal supremacy – revealed a distressing propensity for murdering his own offspring.

So it was that when we moved to our present home in 1985 we still had only four birds. Catching them for transportation was a saga in itself, but we managed it by fixing up the door of a stable with a long draw-string, luring the peacocks inside along a trail of corn, and yanking the trap shut from a distance.

After being driven down the M4 in individual hessian sacks, they soon took to their new surroundings. But here, though again out in the sticks,

we lack the final degree of isolation. A lane runs past the house, and we have nine neighbours, a keen and skilful gardener.

It was one thing for passers-by to gawk in admiration as Shalimar displayed on the terrace, with 100 violet eyes glaring from the iridescent green of his fanned-out tail feathers; quite another when our neighbour's rows of newly-sown carrots were left looking like an exhibit in the Imperial War Museum – a relief model of the battle of the Somme, all mounds and craters.

One spring, our surviving female hatched out three male chicks, and when these all grew into strapping teenagers, we decided that the family must go. They were taken on by kind friends in Oxfordshire – but there they created even worse havoc than with us.

Decamping across country into the nearest village, they took up residence in trees around the graveyard and split the community, exactly as in Aveybury. One faction demanded their immediate removal or extermination; the other threatened to prosecute anyone who laid a finger on them.

Here, Shalimar lived on for a year in solitary splendour, sometimes doing no mean damage to visiting cars, in whose gleaming paintwork he discerned phantom rivals.

Eventually, one winter dawn, a fox got him in the orchard; and unless I win the Lottery, so that I can buy a stately home in the middle of a 300-acre park, I do not think we shall ever replace him.

More noisy neighbours on page 22

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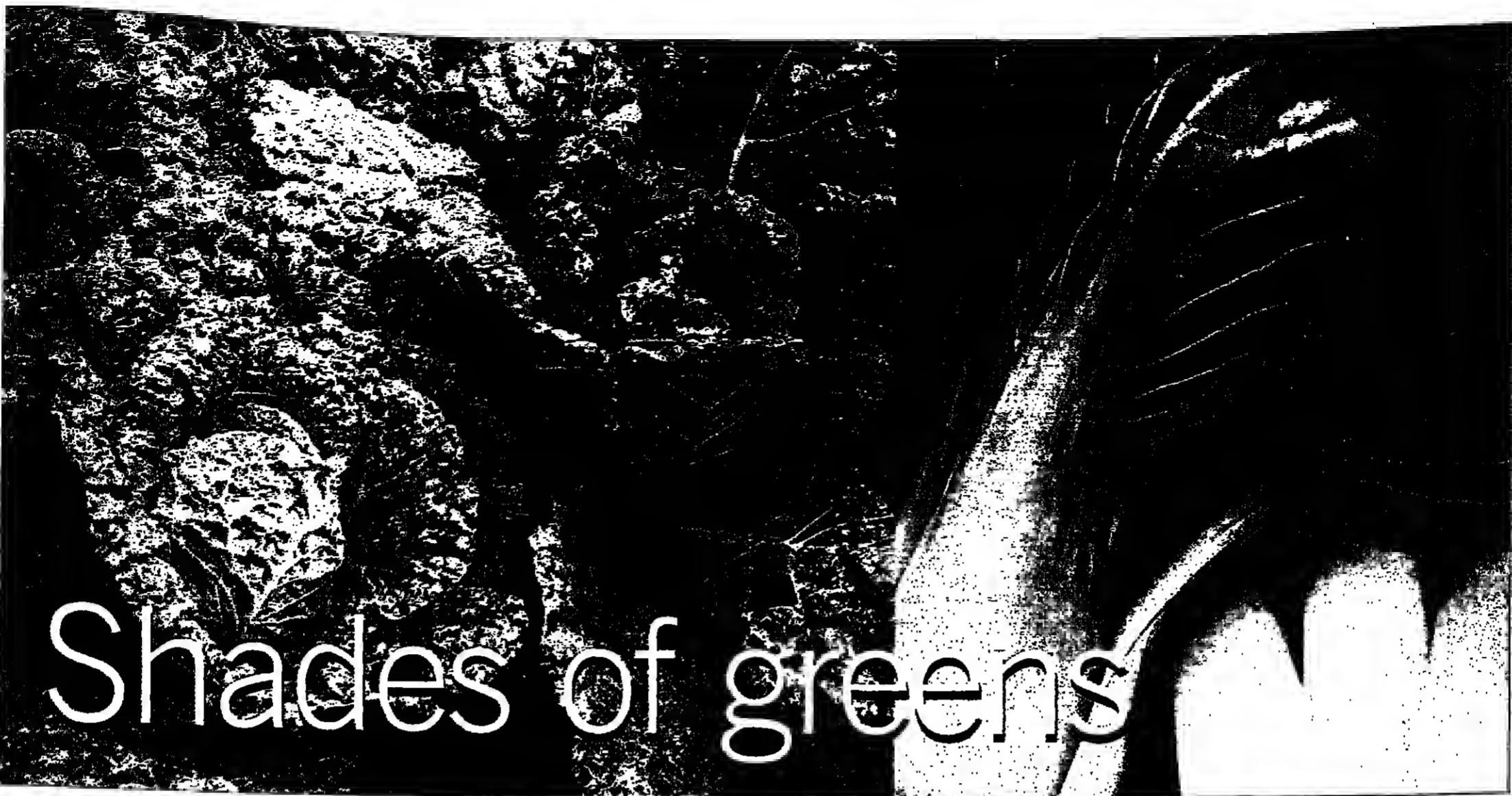
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WEEKEND WORK

Start a hawthorn hedge by taking cuttings (3-4 in long) of on-flowering shoots and sticking them round the edge of a pot of sandy compost. Keep them in the cold frame or a shady place where they will not dry out too quickly. Rooted plants can be set out next spring. Deutzias can also be propagated now. They are medium-sized shrubs no more than 5ft high and wide, covered in clusters of flowers, white, pink or purple. Choose half-ripe lateral shoots (those that grow out from a main stem) and set them in sandy compost in pots or a cold frame. Rooted plants can be set out next autumn. *Philadelphus senecio* and shrubby grey-leaved *Artemisia* such as *A. arborescens* can be treated in the same way.

If you can bear to, cut back any violas and pansies that you want to increase, and cover the crown of the plant with a finely sifted mixture of sandy soil. This will encourage the plant to produce some good new growths. You can then pull these out with a few roots attached and pot them up to grow on as new plants.

Take cuttings from tender plants such as geraniums, fuchsias, helichrysums and penstemons. All these root easily in small pots, but must be given frost protection through the winter before they are planted out again late next spring.

Cut back tarragon, mint, savory and other such herbs. This will force them to make useful new growth. Fennel heads are handsomely in flower now, but need to be cut down before the seeds spread over the garden.

Cyclamen corms that have been resting can be started into growth again now. Clean off all the old leaves, shake any loose soil off the roots and re-pot the corm in the smallest possible pot. Use John Innes No 1 compost or its equivalent and set the corm so that the top just shows above the compost. Spray the corm every day with tepid water to start it into growth. Do not bring the plant into the house until there are at least four flowers in bud.

Shades of greens

Sow now, to cut colourful, tasty leaves until the end of the autumn, writes Anna Pavord

Successional sowing of seeds in the vegetable garden is very much easier to work out on paper than it is in practice. On paper you make neat little notes reminding yourself to sow salad crops such as leaf lettuce, radish and rocket at regular two-week intervals through the summer. You construct little plans like crossword puzzles, showing how all this is going to fit in on the ground available. But the weather is not a clock-watcher. One sowing bolts another sulk. The result? A monumental pile-up of crops all ripening at the same time.

This is all part of the process of learning how to garden. When you start off, you think there must be rules to obey, and that if you obey them, success will naturally follow. As you go on, you learn that rules are much less useful than the ability to interpret what is going on round you. Your own eyes are far more valuable than any rule-book.

Some years, you can smoothly follow a sowing of broad beans with a planting of cabbages or sprouting broccoli, set in the same ground that the beans have been growing in. This year, I couldn't. The beans ('Green Windsor', Johnnies, £1.45) went in on 17 March, two double rows. The crop, an enormous one, was not finally cleared off until the end of July, later than I had expected.

So the succession I had planned - a row of purple sprouting broccoli and a row of crinkly savoy cabbage - had to be kept waiting in the wings. Seeing, some time ago, that the broad beans were not going to give way in time for a smooth transfer, I potted up some of the cabbage and broccoli seedlings and grew them on in pots, until they could be transplanted. It worked fine. They are planted out now, netted against the pigeons.

The 'Douce Provence' peas (Marshalls, 99p) have come and gone, too, and there's another long space where the first early potatoes, 'Accent', have been lifted.

Although sowing seed seems more of a

spring than a late summer activity, there are in fact plenty of vegetables that can be grown from seed now in spare patches of ground.

Autumn salads are perhaps the most useful. Chervil, chicory, endive, radicchio, corn salad, land cress and purslane are all easy and relatively quick. All can be picked when young to make mixed leaf salads that will keep you going until next spring.

Aniseed-flavoured fresh chervil is a revelation to anyone who is used only to the dried kind. It is one of the ingredients in the classic *fines herbes* mix called for in French cookery. It's an umphifier, like our native cow parsley, and has the same kind of very finely cut leaves. It grows fast. You can gather it six or eight weeks after sowing.

Grown in deep boxes in a cool greenhouse, it will give fresh supplies of leaves all through the winter. It prefers shade to sun, which is useful in our shady garden.

Suffolk Seeds offer two kinds: plain (90p), and curled (1.15p). The curled is the prettier of the two. Sow it as thinly as possible, either in rows, or broadcast. It is wonderful chopped into an omelette with parsley and chives.

Chicory, endive and radicchio are all ideally suited for late-summer sowing. If you sow endive before August, it often runs straight to seed. As it is harder than lettuce, you can harvest it until January.

Endive used to be grown in great quantities in the market gardens round London, blanched and protected from severe frosts by a light covering of hay. The variety 'Sally' (Marshalls, £1.05) is self-blanching. The centre of each plant is packed with small white leaves, which gradually darken as they age.

The names are muddling. In France, curly endives such as 'Sally' are called *chicorée frisée*, and the stuff we call Belgian chicory, looking like small cream bombs, is called *endive*. In growing terms, the major difference is that endive is an annual. Chicory is not, and in its second year, if you let it run up to seed, it produces tall sheaves of sky blue flowers.

There's just time to squeeze in a late sowing of the red-leaved chicory, which we generally call radicchio. 'Rossa di Treviso' is an old Italian variety with bright red, pointed leaves, a decorative enough vegetable to grow in the flower garden. It is very hardy. Sow the seed no more than half-an-inch deep, in rows about 1ft apart. As the plants develop, thin them out until the remaining ones stand about 1ft apart. You can use the thinning in salads.

The ideal way to pick chicory and endive is to remove a few leaves at a time, from young, curly plants. If you want to cut a whole head, make the cut an inch or so above the neck. The plant will sprout again.

Sugar loaf chicory is the one that looks like a Cox's lettuce, with tall leaves wrapped around a tight heart. You don't need to blanch it as you do with the Belgian, bomb-like chicory. 'Crystal Head' (Marshalls, 95p) is a sturdy variety that takes more frost than lettuce can stand. 'Blanca di Milano' (Suffolk, 85p) is a reliable Italian variety. You can either leave the plants as they stand, and use them as a cut-and-come-again crop (start cutting when the leaves are about 3in high), or thin the plants out to about 1ft apart to grow on into adults.

The Oriental equivalents of these crops are mibuna, pak choi and Chinese cabbage. They are also ideal for autumn planting. If you want to cheat (as I do) you can order young plants to set direct into the ground. Marshalls is offering 60 plants for £9.95. You get a dozen each of five different kinds, including the vigorous mibuna called 'Green Spray'.

Mibuna has long, narrow leaves that grow in an elegant clump, arching out slightly from the centre. Like its cut-leaved relative mizuna, it prefers cool to heat. If you treat it as a cut-and-come-again plant, you can start to harvest a crop within a month.

The flavour is mild, if you eat the leaves young. They toughen up as they age. It is equally good raw in a salad, or used in a quick stir-fry.

The other vegetables in Marshalls Oriental package are the pak choi 'Mei Qing Choi', kai laan, which you use a bit like our sprouting broccoli, a hybrid Chinese kale called 'Autumn Poem', and the Chinese cabbage 'Kasumi'. Stuffed cabbage recipes usually stipulate European-style cabbage, but the Chinese type is just as good, and doesn't need so much cooking.

Orders for oriental vegetables must be in by the end of August. Contact SE Marshall, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2RF (01945 466711). Suffolk Herbs are at Monks Farm, Coggeshall Rd, Kelvedon, Essex CO5 9PG (01376 572456)

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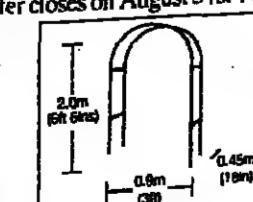
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Blyton: the wrongs and writes

Few writers have suffered such opprobrium as Enid Blyton. Fifty years ago her work was pronounced 'ephemeral' by one librarian, there were accusations of classism, sexism and racism and more esoteric interests such as the use of spanking came under scrutiny in the Faraway Tree. She was attacked for undemanding, repetitive vocabulary, weak, unrealistic plots, and poor characterisation. Nevertheless, Blyton, who would have celebrated her centenary this month, sold 700 books, and The Famous Five, Secret Seven and Noddy are back on the shelves. What do her readers think of her now? Gwenda Joyce-Brophy finds out

Ann Widdecombe (age 48)
Occupation: MP
Read: "Every one" of Blyton's books.
Favourite Series: Mallory Towers (set in a girls' boarding school). They were really exciting.
Favourite character: Big Ears - he was endearing.
Influence? They encouraged me to read, read and read. The best stimulus to a child's mind is the development of an active imagination in a creative, yet structured form - enter Enid Blyton.
Politically correct? I loved my golliwog. Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes.

Clare Short (age 51)
Occupation: Secretary for International Development

Read: Quite a few I think of the Famous Five and Secret Seven. They were an easy read but I read lots of other books as well.

Favourite character: George the tomboy. [Georgia of the Famous Five]. I think like many women I identified with the more independent-minded girl character.

Influence? Not a lot.

Politically correct? My upbringing celebrated all the values that are now described as politically correct; they were, and are, strong in me. I didn't object to Enid Blyton, but I did recognise that the books were a bit trivial, but I still enjoyed reading them.

Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Probably not. I wouldn't ban them, but I feel that there are other, perhaps better, books available.

George Player (age 48) Occupation: Features Editor for *Period House* magazine
Read: Famous Five.

Favourite series: Famous Five, they were good adventure stories.

Favourite character: Probably one of the boys.

Influence? The Famous Five had good action holidays. My children I hope have had something of the same, but with pretend rather than real-life baddies. I finally stopped reading Enid Blyton books

when I grew up myself, about three years ago.

Politically correct? My memory is that the children seemed normal, natural and polite. The politically correct aspect of some children's books today is so laboured that it overpowers the story line.

Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes.

Fern Britton (age 39)
Occupation: Currently presenter of *Ready, Steady Cook*

Read: All the adventure and mystery stories plus school books such as Mallory Towers.

Favourite series: The adventure and mystery ones. I loved the gripping nature of them - honestly! They left me totally spellbound. I identified with all the characters, and I also loved the fact that adults didn't interfere.

Influence? They created a huge extra dimension to my childhood, a childhood shared with the characters. They were my adventures, too.

Politically correct? No. Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes.

Gifty Gakpeto (age 32)
Occupation: Law graduate, from Ealing, Middlesex, working in Intellectual Property protection.

Read: Famous Five and Secret Seven at home in Ghana.

Favourite series: The "Adventure" series. I loved the suspense and the tension the stories created.

Influence: It enlightened me, and showed me how other kids behaved and reasoned.

Politically correct? No.

Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes.

Maria Savva (age 24)
Greek, grew up in Haringey.

Occupation: Economics PhD student.

Read: Twenty Minute Stories, later the Famous Five.

Favourite Series: While the stories for younger children drew me in as a Blyton fan, when it came to the series written for older children the love affair with Blyton was over.

Politically correct? The characters did not seem exotic enough to be truly exciting, yet they were far enough removed from my life and experience growing up in

Haringey so that I could just not identify with them. They were just too middle-class for my liking.

Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? No.

Andrew Davenport (age 31)

Occupation: Writer and co-creator of the television programme *The Teletubbies*.

Read: *The Adventure of the Wishing Chair* and the Secret Seven.

Favourite series: Secret Seven.

Favourite character: The Wishing Chair was a personal favourite - an ordinary dining room chair that could grow wings and fly.

Influence? For my generation books by Blyton were often the first books that were engaging, as well as being cheap, readily available and easy to read. I think she deserves credit for introducing thousands of children to independent reading.

Politically correct? I remember being slightly baffled by the fact that characters always went away to school and had very large gardens and playrooms, but I don't think as a child you really question this. I think you're far too preoccupied with the notion of a chair that might be able to fly than with social issues.

Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes. I don't see why not. Children's culture has boomed in recent years and there is a lot more to choose from and I am not sure that Blyton would be at the top of a list. I certainly would not prevent a child from reading any book they found fulfilling.

Charles Kennedy (38)
Occupation: Agricultural and Rural Affairs spokesperson, Liberal Democrat Party.

Read: The Famous Five, Mallory Towers and the Secret Seven series.

Favourite Series: Secret Seven. The mystery plots and all the detail appealed to me.

Influence: I would say that her books added to my imagination. I ultimately stopped reading them because they all belonged to my elder sister and she grew them.

Politically correct? Some of the references in her books were decidedly middle-class English, and thus alien to me as a Scot. Would you/have you bought Blyton for your own or other children? Yes.

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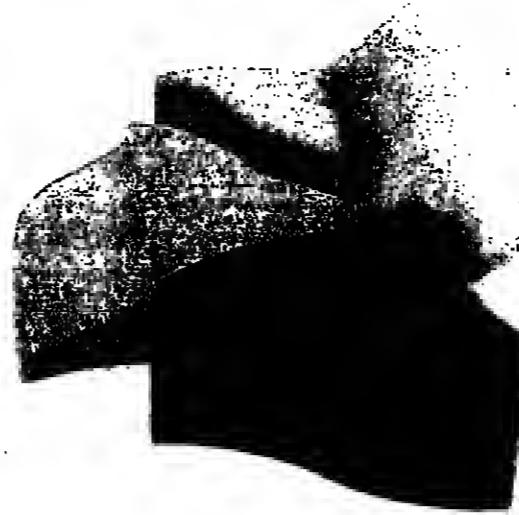
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Under the counter with Lindsay Calder

Next month I will be twenty-nine. So you know what that means, this time next year... I've spent the last couple of years not really remembering whether I was 26 or 27 or 28 – no worries. But I can see now that this was a kind of sub-conscious avoidance of *anno Domini*, refusing to acknowledge the GMT of my biological time-clock.

A recent catalogue of events has made me realise, with horror, that lots of people are younger than me. For instance last week I learned that my ex-boss's eighteen year old son was going out with a twenty-eight year old woman who is a model for the artist Lucien Freud. I remember when this sweet fair-haired boy had his first day at Eton: how he used to come into the office during the holidays, all shy and awkward. Now he is 6ft 4, and with this woman, who according to an ex-colleague, Freud paints "beaver and all".

Then there are all these girls who have barely even finished their GCSEs, writing best-sellers in their bedrooms. And of course, the Spice Girls. The affectionately-named "Baby Spice" is twenty-one, 5ft 2, and enjoys such celebrity that – you know what – the competition in the front page of my local paper this week is "a once in a lifetime chance to win Baby Spice's plaster cast". Can you believe that? (She injured her wrist in Turkey last month, apparently.) It's just gross.

Next year I will even be too old to go on a Club 18-30 holiday. Not that I particularly want to go, you understand, but I can't bear the idea of being too old for anything. There is, of course, a solution. A friend of mine, who shall remain nameless, has been lying about her age for the last few years. I recently met her in a bar, where she had to

prime me at the door: "look, everyone here thinks I'm twenty-eight, OK?" Please don't say anything.

We later spent hours agonising over our imminent decrepitude, discussing everything from wrinkle cream in contraception, along the lines of "mine are much worse than yours" and "are you sure that's safe?"

After going through Phytocream, Primordiale, Persona, the Pill, and a few gallons of Chardonnay, she had a brainwave: "I know, let's get our belly-buttons pierced". This was a desperate attempt to recapture the flat-stomached, come-and-get-it, don't-give-a-shit golden youth we once knew,

but unless I go to Marbella for my holidays and hang out with a bunch of eighteen year olds who the hell is going to see this thing? Then if the idea of it is to ensnare a muscular young toyboy, what happens – as he too would presumably have a belly-button ring – *in flagrante delicto* if your rings get caught? The thought is too awful. "No" I said. "It would ruin against the waistband of my Nicole Farhi suit, you'll have to think of something else".

She, however, is going for it – I hope it helps. Meanwhile I'm kicking myself over the hill with intensive sessions in the gym, lashings of Primordiale, cans of caffeine-loaded drinks and definitely not reading "Cosmopolitan's Thirty Things You Should Have Done by Thirty".

Primordiale Serum by Lancome, £37 from Fenwick, 63 New Bond Street, London W1. *Anti-ageing Phytocream*, 60ml, £9.95 from Verde, 15 Flask Walk, Hampstead, London NW3.

Naïve piercing, £25-75, depending on choice of ring, (about 10 other parts of the body can also be pierced...) *Metal Morphosis Body Piercing Studio*, 10/11 Moor Street, Soho, London W1V.

THE INDEPENDENT

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Lunch at MEZZO for £10

And receive a complimentary glass of Laurent-Perrier Champagne

The Independent and the Independent on Sunday are giving you the opportunity to enjoy a two course lunch at Mezzo for just £10 or a two course dinner for £17.50. Every Independent diner will also receive a complimentary glass of Laurent-Perrier Champagne.

The Independent diner making the reservation, and all their guests will be able to choose a starter and main course, or a main course and dessert from the specially prepared Independent menu - samples of which were printed yesterday (the menu will be subject to change throughout the course of the offer). Alternatively, you can have a three course lunch for £13.50 or a three course dinner for £21.50. The promotion is valid until September 20 only in the Mezzo Downstairs restaurant.

How to Book

Phone Mezzo Downstairs in advance on 0171 314 4000 to make your reservation. Identify yourself as an Independent diner, and quote the password - 'Mezzind'. The lunch offer is available every day, except Saturdays, while you can take advantage of the dinner offer between Sundays and Wednesdays. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

Laurent-Perrier Brut is the perfect aperitif Champagne showing excellent balance, freshness and delicacy. Known for its quality and reliability, Laurent-Perrier's finesse makes it the perfect introduction to any meal.

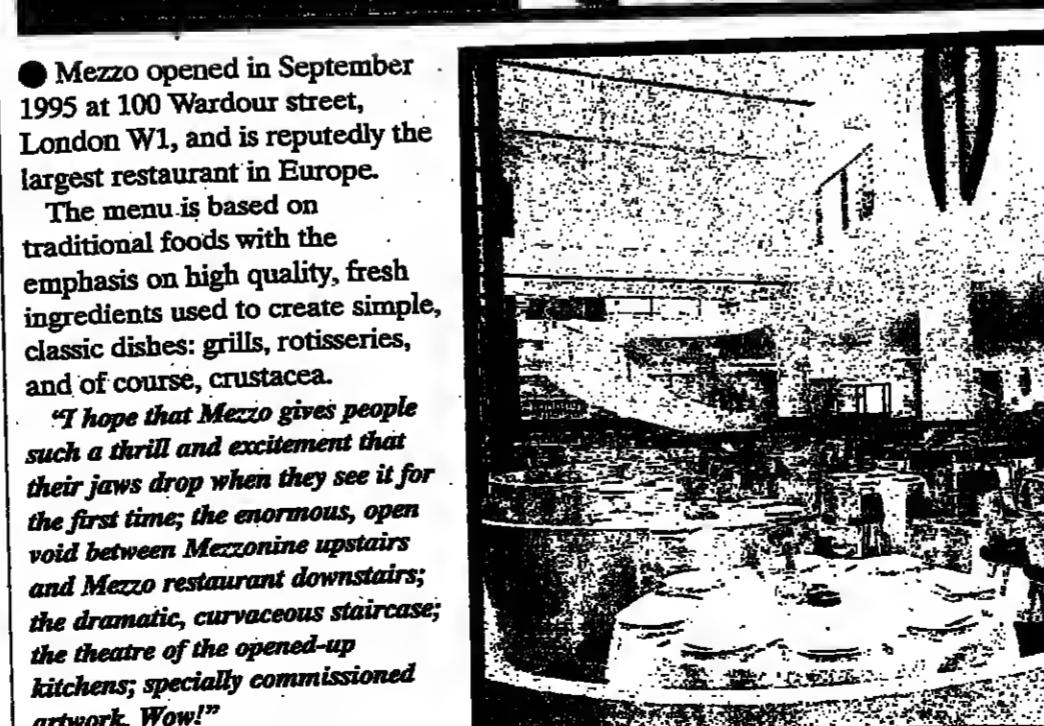


● Mezzo opened in September 1995 at 100 Wardour Street, London W1, and is reputedly the largest restaurant in Europe.

The menu is based on traditional foods with the emphasis on high quality, fresh ingredients used to create simple, classic dishes: grills, rotisseries, and of course, crustacea.

"I hope that Mezzo gives people such a thrill and excitement that their jaws drop when they see it for the first time; the enormous, open void between Mezzanine upstairs and Mezzo restaurant downstairs; the dramatic, curvaceous staircase; the theatre of the opened-up kitchens; specially commissioned artwork. Wow!"

– TERENCE CONRAN



Win a Mezzo Dinner Party

In addition to the Mezzo lunch and dinner offer, The Independent and Independent on Sunday are running an exclusive competition whereby John Torode will prepare and cook for a private dinner party (for up to 8 people) in the home of one Independent reader.

John Torode, well known for his TV work, is "The Chef" at Mezzo and is responsible for all food in a restaurant which on any given day can serve up to 2000 people. John will plan the menu with the winner and prepare a 3 course dinner with a selection of wines to complement the meal. Mezzo will also provide their Sommelier, Kate Thal, to serve your guests.

A budget of £250 will be made available for purchase of food and wine. The dinner party can be arranged for any time between October 1st 1997 and January 31st 1998.

How To Enter

All you have to do is prepare your answer to the following questions:

1. What does the Italian word 'Mezzo' mean in English?
2. Which famous music club formerly stood on the site of Mezzo at 100 Wardour Street?

Then telephone the following number: 0930 563 700

Leave your answers to the two questions, together with your name, address and daytime telephone number. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Your calls should last no longer than three minutes. Lines will close at midnight on Tuesday 12th August 1997.

Terms and Conditions 1. The competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 or over, except employees of Newspaper Publishing plc and Mezzo, their family, their agents or anyone else connected with the competition. 2. The competition closes at midnight on Tuesday 12th August 1997. Closing date for all calls is midday on Tuesday 12th August 1997. 3. The winner will be contacted by post or telephone within 20 days of the competition closing date. 4. The winner will be asked to name a date and time for up to 8 people, consisting of the following: John Torode up to a maximum agreed to plan the dinner and prepare the meal. A budget of up to £250 will be made available to purchase the food and wine if required. 5. The date of the dinner party must be arranged at a mutually agreed date for John Torode, who reserves the right to cancel or postpone the meal if the date is not agreed. 6. The winner will be asked to name a date and time for up to 8 people, consisting of the meal and the wine. 7. Entry to the competition will be deemed to be acceptance to these conditions.

Promoter: Newspaper Publishing plc, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP.

The RAC's new image is hypocritical: a shallow PR-inspired attempt by a motoring organisation to jump on the green bandwagon. The new crownless logo is a mean-spirited squiggle, a graphic mess, in contrast to the elegance of the old logo. If I were the Queen, I would give up my membership of the RAC in protest, and join the AA instead. And the new bright-orange RAC breakdown trucks look like at vehicles for the self-styled "Knights of the Road".

That's what I think, anyway, and that's what I've written in the past.

Neil Johnson, the RAC's chief executive, ex-Sandhurst, ex-Royal Green Jackets and ex-Jaguar director, disagrees. This is not surprising. Many of the new features are his ideas. But instead of merely dropping me a snotty letter and wiping my name off the list for new RAC road atlases (for review, of course), he said: "Let's talk".

So we are. I'm in his big office, overlooking Cockspur Street, right next to Trafalgar Square. He says thanks for coming, and I say "Isn't the new image just an upshot of research you've commissioned that says the RAC is a fusty old organisation, about as in touch with everyday issues as Bertie Wooster, and some clever ad people have now come up with a new identity to boost business?" Or words to that effect.

He says, "Yes, partly", and that rather disarms me. "All organisations have to take stock of where they're at, and prepare for change. On our centenary, it seemed a good time to do that. Our corporate identity hadn't changed since 1972, so we thought it was time. But this isn't just a PR campaign. There is real substance behind our claims. If there wasn't, it would all be bullshit."

Mr Johnson says that the next 20 years will see as many changes for motorists as the first two decades after the car was invented. "Not so many years ago, people joined the RAC because there was a reasonable expectation that, on a long trip, your journey would be interrupted by a breakdown. That just isn't true any more. But, increasingly, there is a reasonable expectation of long delays owing to congestion. One of our main thrusts, in the new-look RAC, is to be able to help our members avoid delay, and keep them on the move."

The RAC's solution sounds like some sort of science fiction. Increasingly, though, the measures are science fact. "We'll not only tell members what the traffic is like before setting out - we do that already,

Nerds of the road

Gavin Green
is impressed by
the new-look RAC's
hi-tech plans

We'll give them individual updates on traffic conditions as they move along." In a nutshell, Mr Johnson anticipates doing a deal with a mobile phone network so that, as a car moves from one phone cell to another, the RAC tracks its progress. "It's quite easy to anticipate the car's route. If bad traffic lies ahead, we'll ring you on your mobile phone, warn you about the traffic ahead, and suggest an alternative route." Mr Johnson reckons, "By the end of the decade, we'll be deeply there".

Equally, breakdown services will be revolutionised. The Knights of the Road will be replaced by nerds of the road. Come the new millennium, the on-board computers already fitted as standard to most modern cars will notify the RAC - via the car's mobile phone, about an imminent problem. "At the moment, the on-board computer diagnostic equipment is used when the car is being serviced but, on the move, it is incapable of transmitting



Driven man: Neil Johnson, RAC's chief executive

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BURMAN

this information. In the future, it will. It will tell us automatically about an imminent problem, we'll ring you in your car, and suggest you meet an RAC van in a certain location."

Mr Johnson says that an organisation dealing with such "hi-tech" issues needed a new logo, and that the crown, "which is perceived as quite old-fashioned," would not have been appropriate.

"Plus, there is a certain tastelessness in commercially exploiting the crown. A lot of companies just don't like doing that sort of thing any more. The crown stays on the logo of the RAC Motor Sports Association, which controls all British motor sport, and on the logo of the Pall Mall men-only RAC Club. The Queen, far from rushing off to join the AA in a huff, "was fully supportive".

On the RAC's much publicised "greening", Mr Johnson confirms that the RAC "is still a motoring organisation". This is contrary to what was said at the Islington press conference a few months back (even the location was new-wave trendy) at which the RAC was transmogrified into a "mobility" organisation, whatever that means. Before I could cause Mr Johnson too much embarrassment here, he was quick to point out that "the main area of mobility we deal with, is, of course, motoring. But it should be obvious that traffic congestion is now at the stage that something has to be done. We're trying to balance the reality of what is happening with a desire to be able to continue to use the private car in a reasonable and enjoyable way, and for it to fit into an overall transport package."

He is encouraged by the new government. "They're talking about a rational, integrated transport policy. Of course, it is going to cost money. It's no good telling people they've got to get out of their cars into public transport. What you've got to do is make public transport more attractive. It must be so user-friendly, so clean, so safe, so efficient and so predictable, that it's no contest. Would you rather sit in a traffic jam, or in clean, well-ventilated public transport?"

He denies that such talk is just a big PR stunt, and that the recent multi-million pound ad campaign - which depicted the RAC as the potential saviours from an environmental Armageddon - is more than just puff to encourage a few more car users to join them, rather than the AA. "The ads encouraged people to think in a new way, I hope. Add that to the considerable behind-the-scenes lobbying we do, to encourage the government to offer a proper transport policy, and it is a very tangible plan of action."

The new-look RAC will no longer always be in the "build more roads" camp. "The illogical Mr Toad-like 'lay more concrete for my car' route just isn't realistic," says Mr Johnson. "But some bypasses still make sense, and we will campaign for them. Equally, the state of British roads is disgraceful. The golden rule - it's better to replace a few slates when the roof leaks, rather than wait so long that you need a new roof - was ignored by the last government. Repairs are desperately needed now."

I leave our 90-minute interview agreeing with almost everything that Neil Johnson says. So much for confrontation. But I still hate the logo, and the van.



Pay up, pay up, play the game

ROAD TEST Mercedes-Benz CLK

By John Simister

Badge. More fool us? It's intriguing to see that in Germany, the Peugeot is pricier than the Mercedes.

For many people, the foregoing will tell them all they need to know about the CLK. It's a swish Mercedes coupé, therefore it's desirable and you want one, end of story.

But I'm going to tell you some more, anyway. Unlike its predecessor, the old-shape E-class coupé, the CLK is (loosely) based on the C-class. Not that you'd guess from the way it looks, because its nose has the four-headlamp face of a current E-class and the tail design is also a smaller, sharper version of that big saloon's. More than ever before, Mercedes' most accessible coupé is its own car rather than a morph of something more mundane.

That it's good to drive goes almost without saying, although the experience is infused with the competent aloofness that is the hallmark of most Benzes. The CLK 320's V6 motor, part of a new family of engines which are shorter than the straight-sixes they replace so that there's more crumple-room in a crash, sounds and feels much like its ancestors, partly because it has a balancer shaft to smooth out the slight tactile and aural granularity sensed in nearly every other V6.

You are, though, driving a Benz. And on this fact is based the UK importer's whole pricing strategy. If the marketers can get away with it, then who can blame them? There might well be a Peugeot 406 V6 Coupé, and broadly similar in on-paper attributes and costing £10,000 less, but it doesn't have the

exhaust valve per cylinder to go with the pair of inlet valves, but it's a very large one. The idea is to keep more heat in the exhaust gases so that the catalyst can work more efficiently. If you're designing an engine today, you start at the exhaust pipe and work forwards. It's a back-to-front world.

This is a quick car, and easy to drive quickly thanks to a slick-shifting five-speed automatic transmission, ample grip and a creamy, fluid demeanour through corners marred only by a rubbery feel to the steering. There's 218bhp on tap, but sophisticated traction control (it works with the anti-lock brakes to slow wheels individually and help inhibit a skid) keeps the power channelled in the right direction. And

should you need to stop ultra-suddenly, the braking system senses the urgency of the pedal's movement and applies extra pressure for a quicker halt.

This is all very good and worthy, but in the end the CLK isn't so special as to justify that huge price. Examine the cabin to see why. It's decently made, and designed with the usual Benz logic, but the materials show signs of cost-cutting out of place in a car of this identity. Given the flimsiness of some mouldings, Mercedes is in danger of risking its rock-solid reputation. Of course the CLK is a good car, but so is the stunningly gorgeous-looking and equally capable Peugeot 406 Coupé. I'd rather save £10,000.

Deceptive Benz: the lean, lithe and supercharged CLK covers ground with consummate ease and rapidity - but with the equally capable Peugeot 406 Coupé at £10,000 less, what price the three-pointed star?

MERCEDES-BENZ CLK320

Specifications
Price: £36,540. Engine: 3,195cc V6, 18 valves, 215bhp at 6,800rpm. Five-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 150mph, 0-60 in 7.0sec. Fuel consumption: 23-28mpg.

Rivals
BMW 320i Coupé, £26,515. Old stager does everything the Mercedes can, but more solid and is more fun to drive.

Peugeot 406 V6 Coupé, £26,620. Perfumed by Pininfarina, and possibly the most beautiful coupé you can buy. Well-built and a great drive.

Rover 225 Coupé, £26,140. Bigger than the Benz, but closer to pensionable age. Looks fit and feels fit, despite fine new KVF engine. Volvo C70, £35,500 approx. Smart new turbocharged coupé has been delayed while Volvo gets the quality right, but should be worth the wait.

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homes & money

Sounds like the neighbours

Domestic noise can ruin your life. But people are reluctant to complain. By Penny Jackson

If there is anything worse than living with intrusive noise it is the thought that nobody else would even try to. The fear of putting a blight on a house when it comes to selling holds a great many people back from complaining too vociferously about the source of a disturbance.

drive people to the depths of despair. Recently, local authorities have become much tougher on anti-social behaviour. From last month, under the 1996 Noise Act, they have far greater powers to curb noise during the night. Offenders face on-the-spot fines of £100, the confiscation of hi-fi equipment and, if they prefer to go to

An acquaintance who lives in the country, is woken up every morning at six by the dogs next door. "They are let out at first light and are then locked in the house all day. They bark almost the whole time. They are clearly unhappy and I feel guilty about not reporting it to the RSPCA, but if we get into a disagreement with our neighbours I am worried we will not be able to sell the house," she explains.

or in-it equipment and, if they prefer to go to court, they risk a £1,000 fine and a criminal conviction. But so far, according to Valerie Gibson, only 8 per cent of local authorities have chosen to adopt the full provisions of the Act, with a round-the-clock service, although many do provide an out-of-hours hotline and weekend patrols. But as complaints about noise everywhere increase, officers are being met by more aggression. There have been reports of

All vendors are obliged to inform a purchaser about a dispute with a neighbour and it is a routine question during the standard preliminary inquiry. Any undocumented niggles, though, can be kept under wraps, which is why some vendors are loath to sell the house," she explains.

More aggression. There have been reports of those investigating complaints being abused, spat at and beaten up.

Fear of violence or some kind of reprisal deters many people from approaching their neighbours. Ms Gibson believes "Most of the

can be kept under wraps, which is why some beleaguered owners prefer to suffer in silence and why buyers are well advised to visit a property at a number of different times of the day. Valerie Gibson, founder of the Noise Network, sympathises with this tendency to keep quiet, but regrets the reluctance householders

neighbours, Ms Gibson believes. "Most of the people who contact us have made an effort to complain, but some are very scared." While accepting that mediation has a useful role, she is critical of some councils' rush to use it, often forcing complainants into making unsatisfactory compromises.

quiet, but regret the resulting noise. Neighbours have about tackling an issue directly. "I know exactly what it is like. At one time we had a woman next to us who played her music very loudly. Buyers would come round but never return. It took a year before we eventually sold and even then we had to reduce the price."

Those who are prepared to enter the legal

In the present market conditions, sellers with a relatively small neighbour problem may well be worrying unduly. Agents say that if buyers like a property and the issue appears only minor, they are more prepared to overlook it than they might be during times of plenty. They may even put a row down to an unfortunate

Those who are prepared to enter the legal fray in search of peace and quiet find themselves set on an arduous course. Les Fenner fought a long battle with a south London borough which placed air-conditioning units for a swimming pool at the bottom of his garden. "I was woken up five or six times a night by the noise. After a year of legal battles, he may even put a row down to an unfortunate clash of personalities.

This may be optimistic when it comes to the unreformable character, but some rows generate an interest all of their own. Take the annual set-to at Garsington Manor, for instance. The 11-week opera season in this Oxfordshire villa generates feelings to rival

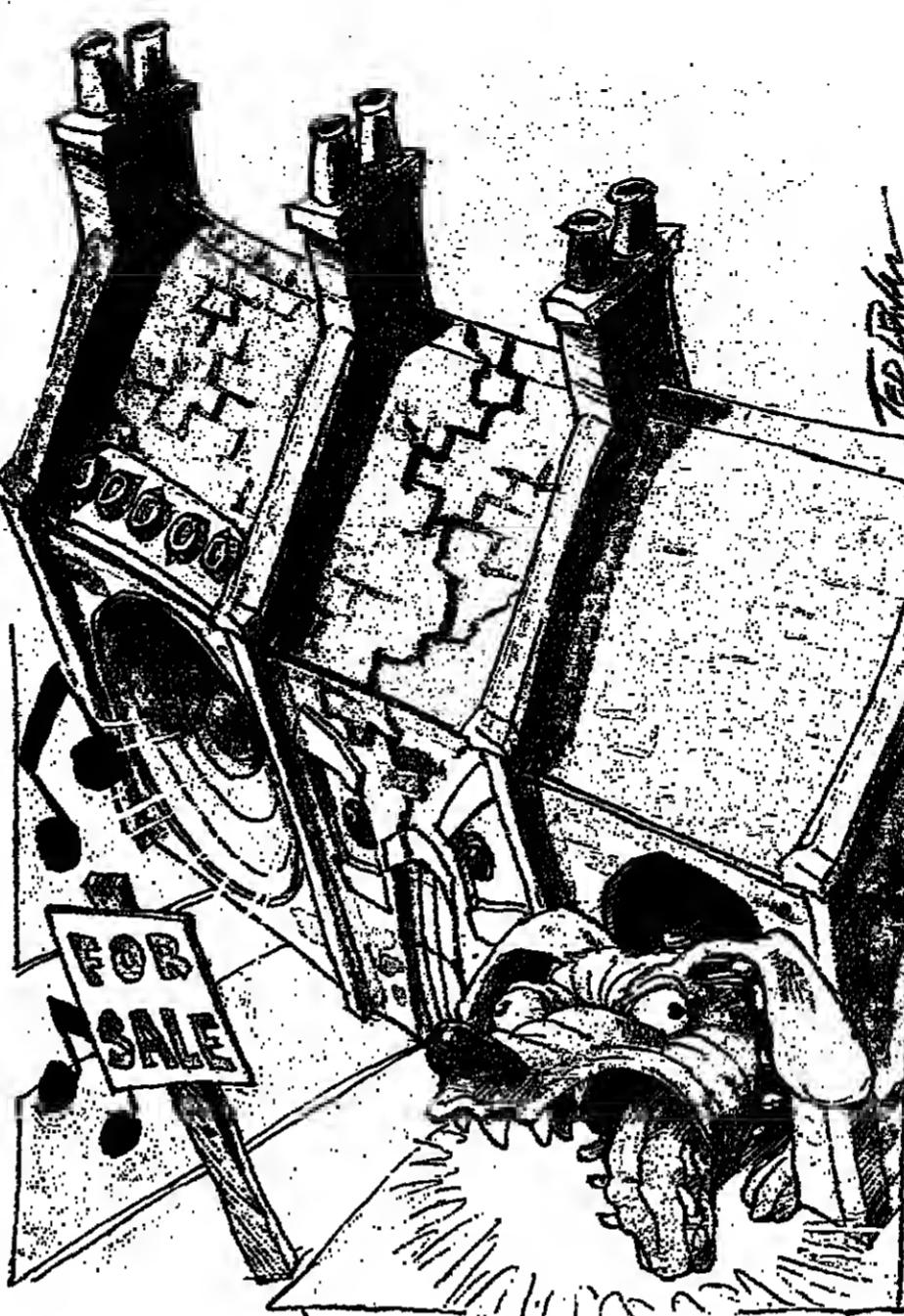
machines. After four years of broken sleep, my health deteriorated and we moved last year to the West Country," says Mr Fanner from his new home overlooking the sea.

"When we put our London house on the market, we told our buyers' surveyor about the long argument we had about the machines but he just said, 'It's not my job to decide if it's

Oxfordshire village provokes feelings to rival anything on stage. At the centre of the anti-lobby is Monica Waud, whose Georgian home is just an aria away from the manor. Given that the opera is now being prosecuted for breaching noise levels, does she feel this would reduce the value of her house were she to sell? "No, for a start," she says. "Our house is not

"Far from it," she says. "Opera has such amazing snob appeal, there are no doubt people who would relish the idea of living so close. It's a little like being in a club."

illness can be triggered by domestic noise, it can bizarre situation."



Three to view

Cream of Devon

Warren Cottage.

Warren College,
near Newton
Ferrers, was built by
the first Lord
Revelstoke in 1882
as a stopping-off
point for lunch on a
nine-mile drive from
his house, Memhland
Hall, around the
Yealm Estuary and
along the cliffs.
Perched above



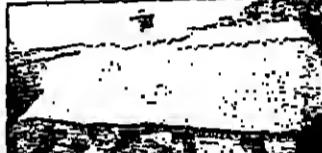
Warren Beach, the cottage was perfect for Edward VII and the Empress Frederick to change into their bathing togs before a spot of lunch. The four-bedroom house with music room, study and an acre of gardens is surrounded by National Trust land. It is being sold by Strutt & Parker who invite final offers by 19 September, at a guide price of £300,000 (01392 215631).

Knowle Down was derelict from the late 1940s until 1990 when the present owners discovered and restored it. The Grade II-listed house near South Molton (six miles from Exmoor) has four bedrooms and three reception rooms and has an additional two-bedroom annexe sitting room has a che



through Webbers (01398 323271) for £255,000.

Mill Cottage at Bolberry, a mile inland from Hope Cove in south Devon, is a traditional old house with deep window seats, oak beams and oak boarded doors. The three-bedroom thatched house has been completely renovated and sits in an acre of landscaped gardens, stocked with wisteria, roses, apple, cherry and viburnum. A stream feeds into a pond of water lilies. Agents Marchand Petit are asking £295,000 (01548 844473).



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Bull market throws up another hazard: information overload

When I moved from working as a fund manager for one of the larger investment houses to the stockbroking firm, I thought I would be spared the piles of paper that used to greet me on my desk when I returned from our breakfast meeting each morning. If my hope was for less to read in a hirok environment, I was wrong. Just as many trees were cut down to satisfy broker/managers as had been the case in the rarefied atmosphere of a merchant bank.

For a brief period, particularly during that time of unnatural quiet that separated the 1987 crash from the Gulf War, the flow of paper lessened. It was too good to last. Gradually the paper flow has picked up. We must be in the bull market to end all bull markets. Speed-reading skills are needed as never before. There can be such a thing as too much information. We have it now.

Let me give you a taste of this week's offerings. Both Nationwide and Halifax are urging me to look at the performance of the housing market. One says growth is slowing with the year-on-year rise down on June's figure.

The other suggests house prices are as buoyant as ever. It is easy to see why the two are not making the same noise.

Halifax has a very broadly based business, stretching throughout the UK. Its contention that house prices rose by a mere 0.1 per cent during July reflects the very uneven nature of the house price recovery. London has been the leader in restoring values to the home owner. Gradually, we are learning from Nationwide, the good performance in the capital is spreading out to the home counties - but this is of much less importance to Halifax customers, who are buying houses the length and breadth of the land.

Still, Nationwide's contention that house prices rose by more than 10 per cent during the past year (Halifax could not even manage 7 per cent) shows just how strong the South-east has been. London actually delivered a 17.5 per cent increase, according to its survey, even though the rise now seems to be slowing.

Interestingly, the recovery in the housing market is delivering less of a feelgood factor than has been the case in the past. Arguably we do not need it.



Brian Tora

'During that time of quiet that separated the 1987 crash from the Gulf War the flow of paper lessened. It was too good to last'

More than £30bn has fallen into the laps of mutual society members, including Halifax borrowers, some of which has been recycled into the real economy.

Which brings me next to the next pile of paper I need to read. As chairman of the investment strategy committee at Greig Middleton, there are reams of opinion to digest ahead of our regular monthly meeting - some considered, some speculative. Among the more interesting items for inclusion in this week's deliberations was the continued remarkable performance of the financial sector.

Can this outperformance continue? Well, we know that consolidation and rationalisation are likely, but it is the potential cost-cutting that is exciting some analysts. It seems 125,000 people are likely to lose gainful employment within this industry over the next few years. This, at least, was the contention of a consultancy which sees an acceleration in the restructuring of the financial services sector.

Actually the consultancy was quite optimistic - 125,000 jobs may go, but 113,000 are set to be created. The bad news is that those likely to find

themselves as candidates for the dole queue are unlikely to fill the shoes put out by employers anxious to take advantage of new opportunities.

According to Create, the originators of the report, those with creative, flexible minds are needed to deal with new customers and offer new services. It is the back-office jobs that will vanish.

Much of the bloodletting is likely to take place in the banking world. Banks have certainly been in the vanguard of the market rise. The emotionally charged 5,000 barrier was breached decisively this week. It joins many other targets in falling to the bulls as the global rush into equities continues. Is Nemesis waiting around the corner? It is a foolish forecaster indeed who states that no correction will take place, but there is no sign that a reversal of fortune is approaching.

In the US bears still outnumber bulls among professional managers. This suggests that there is still institutional liquidity waiting to go into the market. It is undoubtedly true that the supply of equity is contracting as more firms institute share buy-back programmes. Much of the same scenario exists on

this side of the pond. Those managers brave (or foolhardy) enough to announce that cash is king have been taken apart by the market.

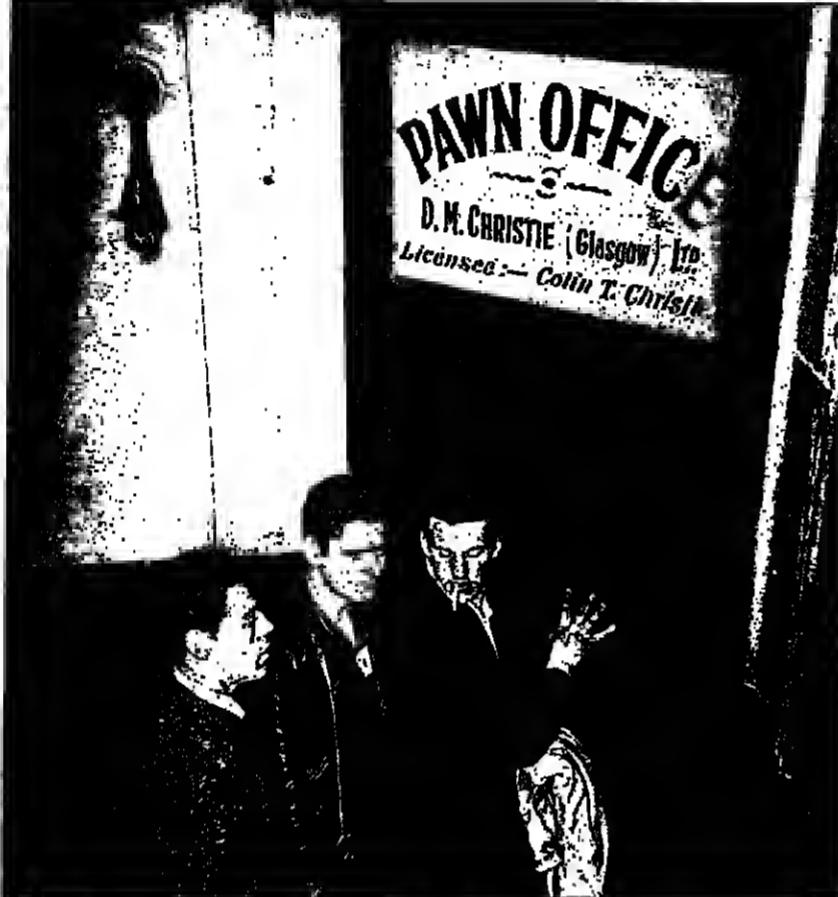
Of course, a trend is a trend until it stops. And stop it will at some stage. Meantime investors should remember that all the action is taking place in a small number of large companies. Look further down the list into the FTSE 250 and you will find prices are rarely changed on average since the start of the year. Good value can still be found amongst mid cap stocks overlooked in the mad bull rush.

For those who bank on even smaller companies, it is worth considering Electra Investment Trust. A 20 per cent discount on "net asset value" must have consistently delivered the goods. Not for widows and orphans, but at least a note on this company is unlikely to extend into the realms of paper with which I usually have to contend.

Brian Tora is chairman of Greig Middleton's investment strategy committee and can be contacted on 0171-655 4000.

The credit trap

Consolidating your debts may not be your best bet, writes Rachel Fixsen



Getting into debt does not have to mean a trip to the pawn shop

Buying on credit is so easy - it's almost as effortless as letting your credit hills get out of hand. Before you know it, monthly repayments can eat up most of your disposable income and you end up with little left to live on.

Short of winning the lottery, what can you do to escape from this trap? "People have got to be motivated to solve the problem before anything can be done about it," says one debt counsellor.

Financial advisers say many of their clients do not realise just how much interest is charged on the money they borrow, whether on credit cards, personal loans or car payment schemes.

Credit card balances can cost as much as 26 per cent in interest a year, personal loans cost up to 27 per cent and you could pay up to 41 per cent interest on an unauthorised overdraft, according to financial data provider MoneyFacts. The effect of these rates can be crippling.

For example, if you had a £1,000 balance on a furniture store card, a £600 balance on a department store card and owed £1,000 to Barclaycard, then you would probably have to pay a total of £700 a year in interest alone. Add to this repayments on a £10,000 mortgage and a new car, and even someone earning £25,000 could find themselves stretched to meet their minimum payments.

Even if you can't really afford it, it is relatively simple to get access to credit. "The problem is, you can get a Dorothy Perkins store card, and then go next door, and get one from another shop," says Stuart Davidson, of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Many organisations share information about how much credit a person already has. This is called white data, as opposed to black data, which includes information about any county court judgements you might have against your name.

When you owe here, there and everywhere, consolidating your debts often

seems a attractive idea. If you have property which is not fully mortgaged, remortgaging it to include the amount you would need to pay off your other lenders might make sense. The rate of interest you pay on your mortgage is likely to be lower than on other borrowings.

Sometimes you can get a personal loan at a relatively low interest rate. Royal Bank of Scotland Direct offers loans of between £2,000 and £15,000 at rates between 12.3 per cent and 13.9 per cent - considerably less than most credit cards.

But Mr Davidson points out that as unsecured personal loans are often repaid over a longer period than store cards, you can end up paying more over the whole term.

If you find yourself with problems, the first thing you should do is contact your lenders. "The majority will suspend the interest payments to help you get out of difficulty," Mr Davidson says.

But there's no point in consolidating your borrowings unless you attack the root of the problem. Why did you overspend, and can you stop this pattern of behaviour? "Once you consolidate, if you then

take out more credit, then you aren't doing yourself any favours," he says. Younger people who have not settled down are especially apt to overspend. Spending on items which used to be regarded as luxuries is often seen as essential now.

Peter White, managing counsellor at the Consumer Credit Counselling Service, says staff at the service always work out a priority budget with their clients.

"You've got to pay your mortgage, council tax - and food tends to be habit-forming," he says. People can get into serious trouble by using available funds to pay to lenders who shout the loudest, rather than keeping up mortgage payments.

Setting a watertight budget helps bring it home to clients that any non-essential spending will mean having to forgo an essential payment, and the consequences of this could be dire.

National Debitline, 0121-359 8501; Consumer Credit Counselling Service, 0800 138 1111; Look in the Yellow Pages under "Counselling and advice agencies" for the Citizens Advice Bureau.

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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

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You might find this a little painful...

Paying the dentist
for treatment can
hurt more than the
work itself if you
are not insured,
writes Nic Cicutti

The next time your dentist asks you to open wide, make sure it's your mouth he is talking about and not your wallet. The mounting financial cost of having your teeth seen to means many people may prefer painful gums to a depleted bank balance.

NHS dental fees are set by the Government, an issue which has led many dentists to complain that they are being paid too little for the services they provide. The result has been a gradual exodus by many dentists from the state system, leaving parts of the UK and some large cities without dentists willing to offer NHS care.

Even if your dentist is prepared to see you on the NHS, costs can be high.

According to *Which?* magazine, which this month publishes a survey of dental insurance, you are required to pay 80 per cent of your dental costs up to £30 for each course of treatment. Anything over that amount, plus the remaining 20 per cent, is paid by the state.

By contrast, private treatment might cost up to £345 for a gold crown normally available on the NHS for £36, while a small filling for which you pay £4.64 on the NHS will set you back from a private practitioner.

While private dentists charge much more, arguably the service is better – at least from some members of the profession. In any case, whether or not this is true hardly matters if you are forced to go private because NHS dentists no longer practice in your area.

If you are paying private rates, insurance is one way of avoiding large and unexpected bills, while helping to spread the cost throughout the year. Some types of insurance also allow you to choose more expensive treatment, such as white fillings in back teeth instead of the metal-looking amalgam.

There are three main types of cover available: capitation, dental insurance and health care cash plans.

Best buys in name only

The advice you receive from an IFA may not be independent, writes Simon English

How truly independent is the independent financial advice you receive? Tens of thousands of customers at Bradford & Bingley might well ask themselves this question following a row between the building society and some of its rivals, who accuse it of only recommending the products of a handful of companies that pay commission to the society.

According to the rules laid down by the Personal Investment Authority, the financial watchdog, financial advisers can either be tied to one firm and sell only that firm's products, or be totally independent, recommending from all available products.

The problem is that most big firms of independent advisers screen the products offered to investors. These so-called best-buy panels are widely used by large IFAs, though some are embarrassed to admit it.

When business newspaper *Money Marketing* tried to publish the best-buy panel of Bradford & Bingley, the largest high street IFA, its response was to threaten an injunction.

Why is the society touchy? For some time Bradford & Bingley has differentiated itself from other lenders by stressing the independence of its advice. Unlike most societies, its 400-strong team of advisers is able to recommend the most suitable pension or investment rather than just one company's, or so they say.

Yet a leaked best-buy list shows that consumers who visit B&B to buy a pension of any kind get the choice of just six products – Commercial Union, Legal & General, Scottish Widows, Standard Life, Clerical Medical and Sun Life.

All of these companies are recognised and respected providers, but some experts claim the list is too short to constitute fully independent advice. So why do they do it?

Virgin Direct makes the point that all of the products listed pay commission to B&B. Why aren't any non-commission products recommended?

Virgin product development manager Martin Campbell says: "It is outrageous that customers who are told they are getting independent advice are being limited to just six pension companies out of the 70-plus in the market."

"I think these plans are a far cry from being the six best buys from a customer viewpoint and commission-free plans don't even get a look in."

So will you get good advice from B&B?

B&B's list is based on research into the performance of the fund managers. B&B makes the point that it spends thousands of pounds on researching which products best suit its clients. Best-buy

panels are updated four times a year to keep companies on their toes. The society claims to know precisely what kind of customers it gets and what kind of products they need. It is so confident of this, that for certain types of products there are only two options to choose from.

If you are not on our panel, B&B says, you are just not up to scratch. However, there are notable omissions from the panel.

Equitable Life, NPL, Scottish Equitable and National Mutual Life are reckoned by most experts to be leading providers of pension, but B&B doesn't think so.

Marketing manager Lynn Colman says: "We start with the same universe as everyone else, but we screen lower. As we know our client base and what our customers' needs are, using best-buy panels enables us to look at the best products for our customers."

The plus point is that B&B is able to get deals for customers by being able to promise bulk sales. This could mean that it negotiates lower charges or special product enhancements.

On the downside, it could also mean that the society can demand high amounts of commission. Companies desperate to buy business and force themselves onto panels are offering higher and higher commission rates, up to 40 per cent more than that paid to small IFAs.

It would be a matter of grave concern if the best-buy tables started to reflect the providers with the deepest pockets rather than the best products.

B&B's rivals among IFA firms claim that six companies is far too short a list to pick from and that the use of best-buy panels makes a mockery of independent advice.

Charles Levett-Skrivener at leading IFA firm Trowy Law says: "If their advisers have got so few options, how can it be independent advice, even if they are good options?"

The PIA says it keeps a close eye on best-buy panels and will stamp down hard on any IFA which gives more than 20 per cent of its business to one company.

Spokeswoman Sarah Modlock says: "Firms must ensure that clients receive suitable advice."

"Clearly this would not be the case where an independent firm restricts itself to using the same small number of product providers and refuses to discuss products of firms outside that group."

For consumers, the question they ought to be asking next time they speak to a supposedly independent adviser should be: "Who else could you have recommended and how independent are you?"

Dental insurance schemes

Capitation schemes
BUPA
Denplan
Insurance schemes
Clinicare
WPA
Health care cash plans
BCWA
BHSCF
Sovereign Healthcare
The Health Scheme
WRCA

Dental Cover
Dental Care
Carte Blanche
Provident
Hospital cash plus
Hospital Cash Plan
Health Care
Healthcare Cash Plan
Premier Plan

Policy name	Number of 108 PPS	Maximum age	Child cover	Waiting period (days)	Overload (%)	Domestic (%)	Overseas (%)
Dental Cover	1	65	✓	15	6 to 10%	90%	8.25
Dental Care	1	65	✓	15	6 to 10%	90%	8.25
Carte Blanche	1	65	✓	15	6 to 10%	90%	8.25
Provident	1	65	✓	15	6 to 10%	90%	8.25
Hospital cash plus	1	65	✓	26	6 to 10%	8.25	8.25
Hospital Cash Plan	1	65	✓	26	6 to 10%	8.25	8.25
Health Care	1	65	✓	26	6 to 10%	8.25	8.25
Healthcare Cash Plan	1	65	✓	26	6 to 10%	8.25	8.25
Premier Plan	1	64	16	26	6 to 10%	8.25	8.25

1 £100 each for two members of the same household paying. 2 £100 each for three or more. 3 First £100 of any emergency treatment. 4 £100 discount for on the same day dental treatment. 5 £100 discount for annual treatment. 6 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 7 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 8 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 9 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 10 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 11 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 12 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 13 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 14 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 15 per cent for four or more members. 16 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 17 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 18 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 19 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 20 £100 per cent discount for groups of two or more. 21 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Newquay is one of those places that divides its tourist population between people who lose their false teeth at the sight of a mini-skirt and people who don't yet qualify for 18-30 Holidays. Sixth-formers whose parents fool themselves that they can't get up to too much in a week under canvas with their mates. The first-jobbers who inevitably end up sleeping in gutters after work does. The place swarms early evening, with kids who are having to be carried by their mates, girls who have slumped against lamposts with their skirts up around their waists. By midnight, the area's pretty much dead.

It's also, it seems, pronounced "Nookie". That was what the conductor called it as the train drew into the station. As if on cue, the half-dozen 17-year-old girls in my carriage, who were off, huge suitcases and separate make-up bags, to share a caravan, leapt from their seats and pressed themselves against the windows when their friend shouted the magic word: "Boys?" "Where?" they cried, and fought to be first on the platform. They don't call it Nookie for nothing.

These girls were obviously not going to make it further than their caravan site, if they made it there at all. Which was a bit of a tragedy for them, because if they had found their way to Fistral beach they would have been in boy heaven. Fistral beach was heaving throughout last weekend with prime examples of the Boy thing: lean, muscled, toffee-skinned, salt-bleached

Boys, mostly falling between the ages of 16 and 22, wearing rubber on the bottom half and, when they were out of the water, nothing on the top. Boys in cool sunglasses, boys with cool haircuts, boys who sat in the sand with their wrists wrapped round their ankles looking serene. Fistral beach, you see, was playing host to the Headwork Surf Festival, and another tribe was finding itself triumphant in the arena of Summer Tribalism.

Saturday was the finals, and the sun, though the rest of the country was awash, had played

ball and was forcing everyone to strip down to the bare minimum. If you'd been unashamed, kidnapped and plunked down there, you would have sworn you weren't in England. The surfers had been battling it out, four at a time, in 20-minute heats, since the previous Tuesday, and the semis were made up of Brazilians, Australians and Californians because, though most extreme sports enthusiasts like to see themselves as more or less anti-establishment, the marketing potential of their activities hasn't gone unnoticed. The labels queue up to put money into spectacles like this: G-Shock, the jelly-coloured unbreakable watch company.

I understand what they meant, though: this was cool in action. After the final siren, Rob Pescado, hot favourite but ultimately untriumphant, rode back in from a couple of hundred yards out on a single wave, standing upright, no tricks. He waved to a couple of kids on the rocks, and then, leisurely, looked down to check the time on his G-Shock. I melted.

We caught a cab back to

Nookie Central, where Bernard Manning plays

sponsor the whole world series, and other labels fight to put their names on the national heats: thanks to Headwork, Cherry Coke, CK specs and £100,000 of prize money, Cornwall has its place on the world surfing map. No one needs to rob banks to follow the waves these days: sponsorship does it for you.

Knots of staggeringly beautiful bodies drifted up and down the sands, drank from bottles of mineral water, elegantly draped backs of wrists over eyebrows to help them squat at the action out on the water. Last year's competition drew 250,000 people over the week, which must have meant that the whole of the rest of Britain was even drier than usual. Pierced-nosed and long-stomached, they stood and sat and said not a word to each other: merely gazed at the waves like a chocolate advert. There wasn't a single person on that

beach who wasn't auditioning for something: *Baywatch*, *Point Break*, *II. Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Midwich Cuckoos*.

And when they got on to their boards, they became demigods. From the cliff, bobbing among the breakers in black wetsuits, they looked like a flock of corcorants. But suddenly one would catch a wave, rush inland, gain his feet and turn into a porpoise. They glided down and up, flipped into the air, turned full circles, tossed their manes and were carried by the force of their own momentum all the way up onto the sand. Whenever this happened, the crowd developed that eerie animation of *Beverly Hills High*: punching the air and shrieking "wooh".

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We caught a cab back to

Nookie Central, where Bernard Manning plays

live every Tuesday night and men in vests jingle change in their pockets and fondle their red bits as they feed the fruit machines in the arcades. Sunday morning, we woke to torrential rain. The picture windows of the hotels were heaving with dismal families who sat in rows and ignored each other. I wandered the streets, got excited about finding a tearoom called the Copper Kettle, considered buying a miniature St Michael's Mount for £14.95 or a pearlised loo-roll holder with rampant pine for £1.99. In the fudge shop on the main street, I found myself standing next to a barefoot Adonis with small goatee beard and pierced nose. "It's lucky it wasn't like this yesterday," I said shyly. He grinned. "Strewth, I know," he said, contriving to fit all five vowels into the simple pronoun. "My hair's as wet as a dingo's belly."

It's possible that in a few years' time, once the dust has settled, historians will come to see that the most destructive phenomenon of the 20th century has been the dominance of management theory. This may sound unlikely, but consider the competition: Stalinism, Nazism – aren't these extreme applications of management theory? What was the Cultural Revolution but re-engineering? What was the First World War but an ambitious example of downsizing, carried out by governments working in co-operation?

What links all these things and management theory is that they all involve reducing people to numbers – perceiving them in essentially economic terms, as units of production and consumption. Certainly Haig's management of his bit of the Western Front during the Great War makes far more sense if you work on the assumption that he regarded conscripted soldiers as disposable, a regrettably inefficient means of mopping up enemy firepower, like a sort of human kitchen-roll.

The connection wasn't made

explicitly, but certainly seemed to lie behind *Time and Motion* Man (Radio 4, last Saturday), a dramatised feature about Frederick Winslow Taylor, the American industrialist who invented time-and-motion studies. In 1911, Taylor testified before a special congressional committee after the introduction of his management methods into American armaments and navy yards had sparked protests and strikes, and Mark Richards used the transcripts (performed by the excellent Colin Stinton and Shane Rimmer) as the framing device for an informative

impressionistic study of how lives have been damaged by the pursuit of efficiency.

Behind Taylor's theories lay a benevolent justification: that only by increasing productivity could mankind raise his standard of living. But as he saw it, such an increase faced two massive obstacles: the laziness and the stupidity of the working man. The solution, Taylor decided, was minute supervision to get the working man to work more efficiently, and to stop him skiving off to the toilets for a fag every 10 minutes.

Taylor's attempt to formulate principles of "scientific management" clearly had a lot in common with the Marxist attempt to create a scientific version of history. In both cases, an enterprise that started out with philanthropic aims ran up against the profoundly irrational, irreducible nature of human desire, and, in both cases, the result was conflict. But admitting that resemblance, and the awfulness of management theory, you could still feel that Richards' programme went a tad over the top, with its great slabs of

elegiac string music. In the end, all that it came up with to condemn Taylor was some sub-Arthur Miller rhetoric, some archive tape of Margaret Thatcher on the need to produce more, and extracts from *I'm All Right, Jack*. This is hardly the court of history in session.

For a more balanced view of management, turn to Patrick Wright's *Here Comes the Boss* (Radio 4, Friday), billed as a history of changing ideas about management. The first two programmes looked at British industry's post-war enthusiasm for adopting military methods, and Wilfred Brown's experiments in worker participation in the Fifties and Sixties. This week, Wright introduced us to "Excellence" – a distressingly vague concept taken up enthusiastically by local councils in West Yorkshire in the 1980s. As a result, Huddersfield played host to a concert by REM. It would have been nice to know whether Wright regarded this as a triumph or an absurdity: so in this respect, an inefficient programme.

Otherwise, excellence all round.

Show the world who's boss



Robert Hanks
the week on radio

Serena Mackesy
In my week

Pierced-nosed and long-stomached, they stood and sat and said not a word to each other, merely gazed at the waves like a chocolate advert



Whatever happened to... Radical magazines

War of Words

Once the printing press was invented, its importance as a means of idea distribution was quickly realised. *Pravda* was founded 1912 by Lenin and had a circulation at times exceeding 10m copies a day.

In Britain, *Marxism Today* was called the "last repository of thought" by Fay Weldon, coined the term Thatcherism, and, according to MP Chris Patten,

treated politics as an adventure for serious grown-ups."

In the Seventies, there was a wave of feminist publishing, at the forefront of which stood *Spare Rib* magazine.

Political Minefield

After the collapse of Communism in 1991, *Pravda*'s circulation shrank to 200,000. In 1996, it became a lifestyle tabloid, claiming that "our readers don't want

some long, boring article taking up a whole page."

In Britain, *Marxism Today* was crushed by debt in 1992. Its former editor, Martin Jacques, set up a (bink-tank) called Demos, calling it a "catalyst for a different, less ideological politics".

Political Politics
Marxism Today was succeeded by *Red Pepper*, a left-of-centre political and cultural magazine.

In 1994, a new magazine called *Prospect* was designed to appeal to a "sceptical age", or what Charles Seaford, the magazine's publisher called "intellectual glamour".

Defeat

This month, the magazine *Class War* magazine has shut itself down with the epitaph: "In short, what passes for a revolutionary movement in this country is pitiful..."

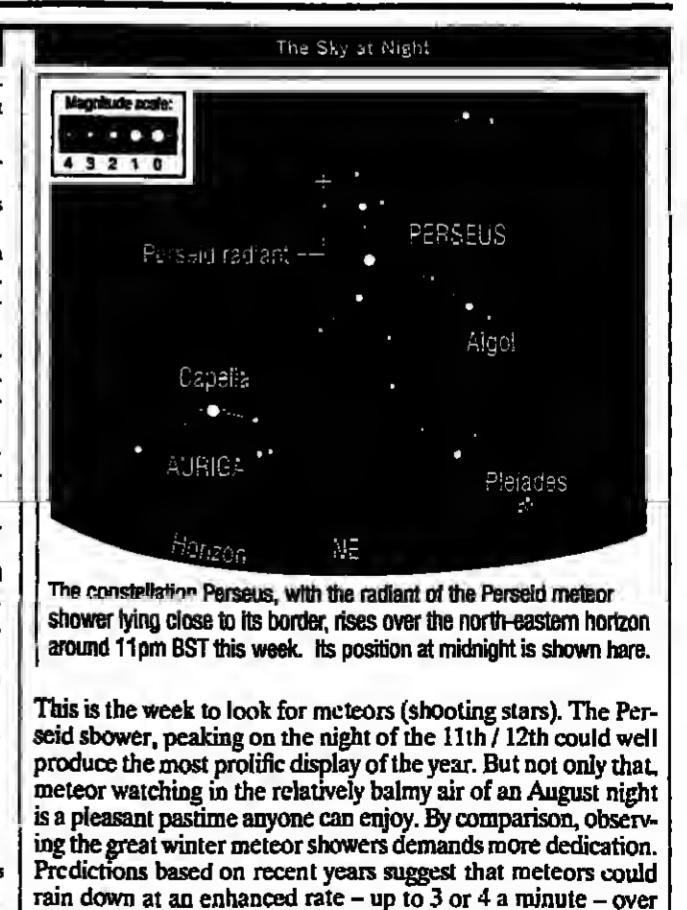
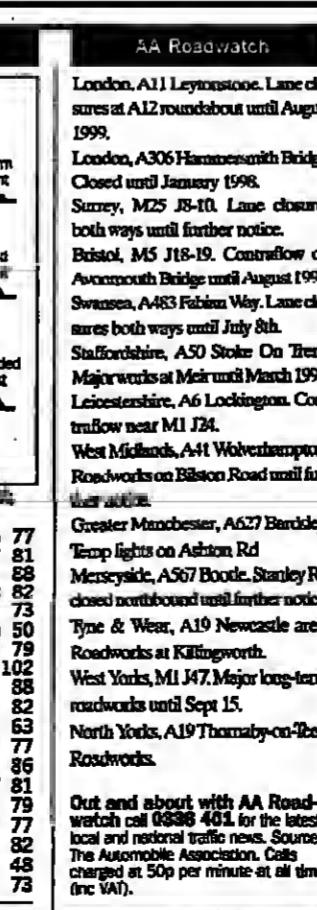
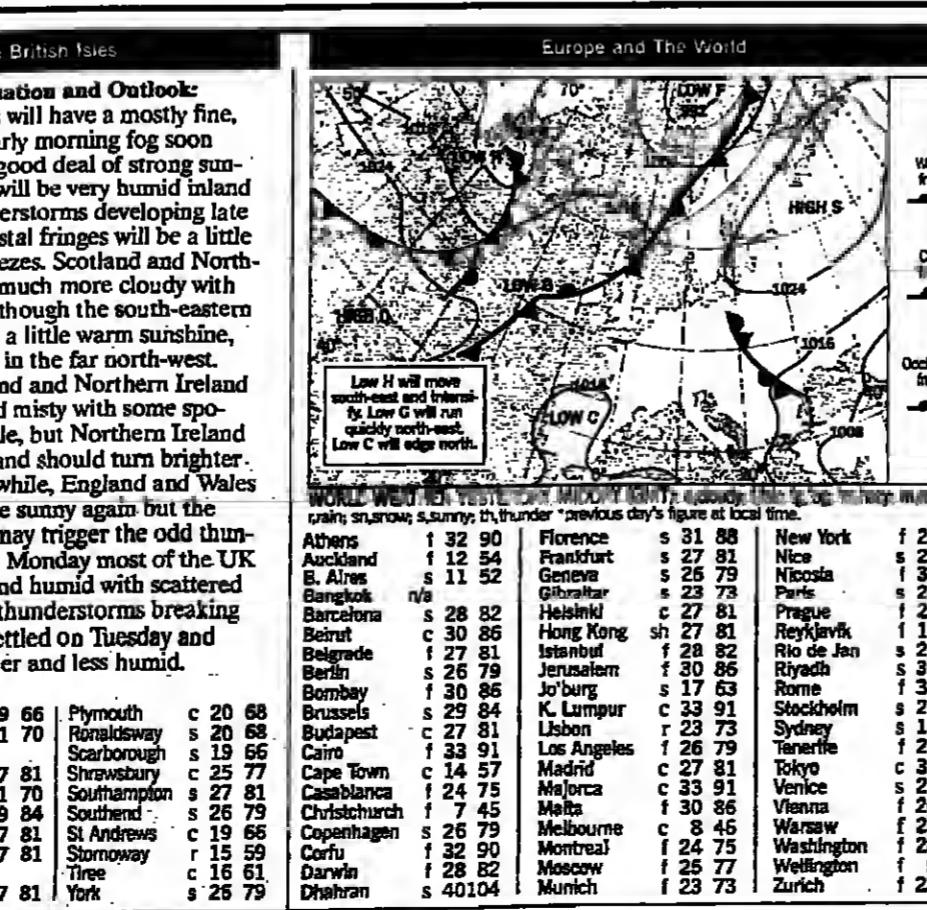
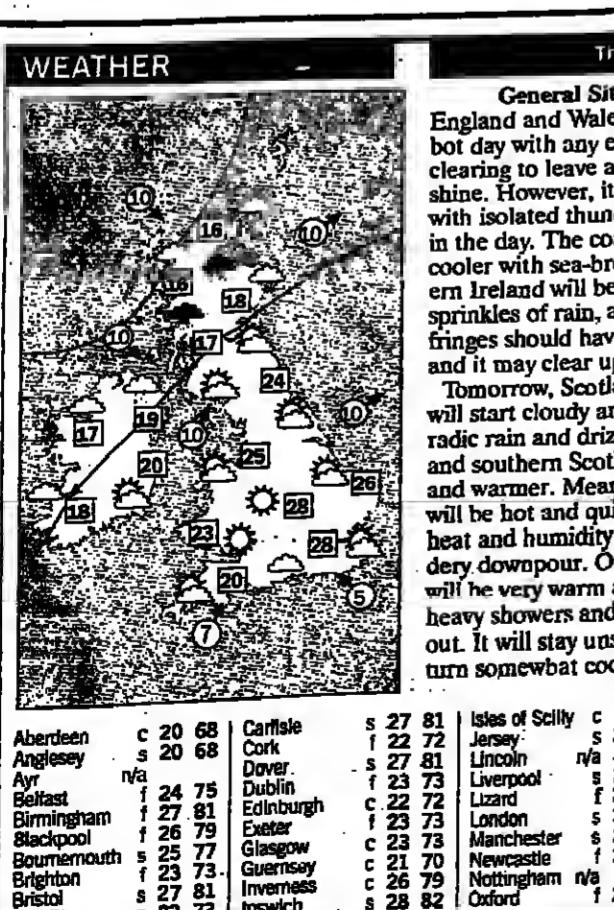
"*Class War* had, at its height, a circulation of 15,000. Instrumental to protests against the Criminal Justice Bill, it resisted Thatcherism, inspiring direct action groups that attracted the attention of Special Branch.

What hope?
Rosie Boycott, co-founder of *Spare Rib*, said: "In the 1960s there was a lot of underground

magazines like *Oz* and *Friends*. Out of this came the political magazines *Red Dwarf*, *Inc.* and *7 Days*, driven by passionate and narrowly focused beliefs. Now such magazines stand alongside the mainstream."

Editors might bear in mind what Sartre once said, that democracy and freedom is a battle that must be fought and won each day.

Jennifer Rodger



This is the week to look for meteors (shooting stars). The Perseid shower, peaking on the night of the 11th/12th could well produce the most prolific display of the year. But not only that, meteor watching in the relatively balmy air of an August night is a pleasant pastime anyone can enjoy. By comparison, observing the great winter meteor showers demands more dedication. Predictions based on recent years suggest that meteors could rain down at an enhanced rate – up to 3 or 4 a minute – over a short period sometime between about 3.00a.m. and 7.00a.m. BST in the early morning of the 12th. However, the bright streaks may flash across the sky at any time during the night, especially between midnight and dawn. The odd Perseid might be spotted on any night between now and about 20th August. Though the sky tracks will all trace back to the radiant in Perseus, meteors will be seen over a wide area of sky, not just in Perseus.

Jacqueline Mitton

school's out

'Gordon's rate of interest has never flagged, rising steadily throughout the term'



David Aaronovitch

The Prime Minister is to issue an annual report, commenting on the progress of his government. An early draft was lying on the desk of a minister I went to see recently, and I managed to read it upside down. In the interest of open government, I reproduce it here.

To all parents and stakeholders: Hail! It's been a fantastically busy first term of the new parliament. On the whole, the Government has done extremely well, adjusting to the new offices very quickly and with the minimum of disruption. Our review groups are now looking at virtually every aspect of administration and policy, and will be reporting well before the end of the century. Which is not - if I may remind you - very far away!

In the meantime, these are my interim reports on your ministers. I hope that you find them instructive and useful.

John: Has had - for him - a quiet term. He has, I think, begun to realise that his occasional over-enthusiasm has led to his taking on too many different things at once. The transport project, especially the Birmingham ring-road, has not quite been the success that he hoped for, and has led to John failing to grip the Nature Studies part of the course. *Effort: A minus; Achievement: C minus.*

Jack: Has set about his task with his usual grim determination, so I've actually seen very little of him! Seems to be achieving a nice balance between liberalism and firmness, but I do wonder where he's keeping all those prisoners! *Effort: B plus; Achievement: B double plus.*

Gordon: Beneath that gloomy exterior there is a very clever chap indeed! His innovative work on the Bank of England has been the talk of the Government, and his rate of interest has never flagged, rising steadily throughout the term. I hope he doesn't find the rest of the work too taxing. *Effort: A; Achievement: A minus.*

Clare: An excellent start! Last term's distressing tendency towards indiscipline has been almost completely eradicated, leaving her free to concentrate on what she loves

best, travelling and sympathising. I thought I'd never be able to say this, but she is an asset to the government! *Effort: B; Achievement: C plus.*

Robin: Difficulties at home have not prevented him from making his mark. His landmark essay "Morality in Foreign Policy" was the talk of the Christian Society, attracting a great deal of favourable comment. Now let's see how he puts it into practice! His forthcoming trip to Indonesia should prove stimulating. *Effort: A minus; Achievement: B double plus.*

Prefects: Peter tells me that morale is good, and that almost everybody is pulling their weight. The plan to send work teams into the vegetable garden to occupy them during slack periods is now close to fruition. Also the work on the Dome is well under way, and, under Peter's inspired leadership, should provide us all with a memorable evening on 31 December 1999.

Matron's Report: Although there are signs of improvement in attendance and punctuality, Miss Harman is concerned that there are still too many who stop work at the smallest sign of illness, or who still refuse to take on tasks that they consider beneath them. A new system of encouraging less hardworking girls and boys to pull their fingers out is about to be introduced.

Trips: It is important that ministers get out and experience life in other countries. I myself have accompanied several such delegations, and although all have been hard work (especially the weekend in Amsterdam) nevertheless a good time was had by all.

Sports: Mr Banks tells me that the First XI has enjoyed mixed fortunes against the Australian boys with a splendid win followed by a couple of disappointing results. Sports day last week was also something of a let-down, with too many of our athletes performing below par. Let us hope that the soccer team will enjoy better fortune next year on their world tour!

All in all, a terrific term - and a year of achievement in prospect. I hope you share my excitement! *Tony Blair*

Tony Blair, the first African PM



Trevor Phillips

The phrases could just as easily be drawn from speeches by Nyerere, Kenyatta or Mugabe as from the New Labour lexicon

Sorry, but when we're down to "Mandelson manipulates the press" and "Labour proclaims achievement of its first 100 days by promising an annual report" you know that domestic politics is on holiday. Turn to the entertainment pages, and we discover the Princess of Wales, as usual. Mr Dodi Fayed may not know it yet, but he has been selected to be the latest candidate for a media death-by-Diana, the fate that inevitably meets anyone standing too close to the Princess. The irony of her campaign to ban landmines is that she is herself a sort of social hand grenade, ready to explode, leaving unsuspecting playboys legless and broken.

However, there are still events happening around the world. I'm sure that Mr Blair is watching with a keen eye from his Tuscan holiday home, because the team is always on the lookout for models of government to enhance his mission, aka The Project.

We know from the welfare-to-work programme that Australia and New Zealand have been under scrutiny, as has the United States, if only because Friend Bill has made so many avoidable mistakes. At one point I feared that The Project was going to be the creation of a proto-Canada - Dulksville on Sunday. But I think that I have finally worked out where The

by Sara Maitland

This month marks the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, a novel that has proved astonishingly influential and effective, having all the qualities of a genuine myth.

Mary Shelley was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Mary Wollstonecraft is now best known as the writer of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and the founder of modern feminism, but in her own day she was as notorious for her support of the French Revolution and her unconventional lifestyle. Godwin was a leading rationalist, a significant political philosopher, and a libertarian Jacobin. Much was expected of their child: particularly as Wollstonecraft died in childbirth.

At 16 Mary fell in love with the young Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, a disciple of her father's who had been expelled from Oxford for writing *The Necessity of Atheism* and, although he was married with two children, ran off with him at which point her father rejected her entirely - despite his previous advocacy of Free Love.

The young couple lived an itinerant life over the next two years, during which Mary suffered a miscarriage and the death of her premature daughter. The couple were clearly very close but Shelley, who was both intellectually brilliant and emotionally volatile, was demanding to live with. The summer of 1816 found them living near Geneva with Lord Byron (by whom Mary's half-sister was pregnant) and their surviving child. Byron and Shelley had formed a friendship of extraordinary intensity, which always contained a strong element of competition.

In this highly charged atmosphere Mary Shelley conceived and wrote *Frankenstein*: a macabre Gothic tale of a brilliant and talented young man who starts out with a proper desire for learning and knowledge, but gets too ambitious. He withdraws from the world and normal human contact into his laboratory and pulls off the greatest victory of all scientific imagination - he constructs a body out of bits of dead flesh, and galvanises it. Far from this turning out to be an exciting and hopeful breakthrough for humanity, the consequences are horrendous.

Frankenstein's creation is horribly botched: unlike nature's creation, it is neither beautiful nor lovable. It is destructive, vengeful, and very dangerous. (Interestingly, the piece of the story that is least prominent in all the retellings is Mary Shelley's central question - is the monster evil

because it is unloved, or unlovable because it is evil?) The monster brutally destroys everything its creator loves - friends, and family, and sanity. Finally, Frankenstein has to sacrifice his life to destroy his own creation. Nothing good comes of this supremely creative act.

because it is unloved, or unlovable because it is evil?) The monster brutally destroys everything its creator loves - friends, and family, and sanity. Finally, Frankenstein has to sacrifice his life to destroy his own creation. Nothing good comes of this supremely creative act.

reference way beyond the cinematic. It is unusual for any pervasive cultural myth to have a known and named author. It is even more unusual for such an author to be a teenage girl.

Why did it work so well?

What nerve is it that *Frankenstein* touched and still touches?

ity? Is cloning a new chance at eternal life, or a fundamental corruption of our individuality? Reproductive technologies continually stir up moral terrors and media controversies - on the one hand it is "natural" (even a right) to have children; on the other hand we should not go to

mous power, they are required to sacrifice certain sorts of normality, whether simple practical skills (professors are "absent-minded" just as saints often were) or more profound satisfactions (like normal human relationships). But these sacrifices make them even more alarming. Scientists

Dr Frankenstein carries great psychological conviction, which is far more important than factual credibility. He is a true tragic hero, noble but flawed. He represents many of our deeper beliefs about what scientists are like; in fact he forms these beliefs. But more importantly, Mary Shelley created a powerful narrative: myths are not just symbols or metaphors or abstract theories; they are always stories. Stories that put in order what we want to think.

One of the problems with myths is that you never know they are myths until you don't need them any longer. *Frankenstein* is a story. Mary Shelley made it up. She despised convention, and conventional thinking. Perhaps we should celebrate this bicentenary by recognising how useful her novel has been, by accepting we have made a mythology out of it, and by treating it as we do earlier myths - by demythologising it, and setting ourselves free from some of our fears. Easier said than done.

From the moment of publication it struck a chord. Dr Frankenstein represents many of our deeper beliefs about scientists - in fact he forms these beliefs

Although it is written with an enormous emotional power, *Frankenstein* was not the first Gothic horror novel, and it was not the first science fiction novel either, but from the moment of its first publication in 1818 it struck a chord, whose reverberations seem to increase still. It is unusual for a novel so in escape from its origins. Almost every eight-year-old in this country now knows the name and something of the story - however botched, confused and reinterpreted - of the hero of a radical, literary, intellectual novel written over 150 years ago. (Although Boris Karloff may have something to answer for, the fame of this story is not based simply on a film version. The name "Frankenstein" has a cultural

The French Revolution destabilised Europe. It raised hopes that reason could perfect humanity and then dashed those hopes. It also led directly to the devastating Napoleonic Wars - which ended only the year before *Frankenstein* was written. And it left Europe with a profound tension between the liberating life-enhancing capacities of human knowledge and the dangers (moral, practical and imaginative) of "interfering with nature".

It is a conflict which has not been resolved in the subsequent two centuries and is seen most clearly in the life sciences, particularly medicine: will reducing pain in childbirth undermine maternal devotion? Will organ transplants change personal

unnatural" lengths to get them.

Robots, cyborgs and clones ("artificial people") are the "hobbies" of popular science fiction - from the film *Blade Runner* (where it is taken as given that it is essential to work out who is a "real" human and who is not, even though it is well nigh impossible to discover any difference whatsoever) right down to the crassest children's TV cartoon, in which human heroes can take on the characteristics of robots, while the villains are technological constructions which take on the appearance of humanity.

Because of such fears, scientists have become what priests and wizards were - they are different from "us".

In exchange for their enormous power, they are required to sacrifice certain sorts of normality, whether simple practical skills (professors are "absent-minded" just as saints often were) or more profound satisfactions (like normal human relationships). But these sacrifices make them even more alarming. Scientists

are also under the suspicion of being more on the side of their inventions than they are on the side of the common man. (Hence the present popular belief that "science is too important to be left to scientists" - they cannot have normal human ethics).

These are precisely the issues that *Frankenstein* addresses. The character of

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obituaries / gazette

Professor J. D. Pearson

J. D. Pearson was the most influential librarian in Oriental and African studies ever known in Britain. When he was appointed to the library of London University's School of Oriental and African Studies in 1950, the library had 17 staff members and a stock of 100,000 volumes; when he gave up the librarianship 22 years later the staff stood at 40, the stock at some 500,000 items, and it was the most important library of its kind in Europe.

James Douglas Pearson was born in 1911 and educated at Cambridge County High School for Boys. He left school at the age of 16, with as he himself termed it, "undistinguished attainments" and secured a post as a book-fletcher, or "library boy" in the Cambridge University Library.

Inspired by the example of the librarian, A. F. Schofield, he developed a passion for languages that became a byword among his contemporaries in the library. "A scholarship was then found for me at St John's College," he recalled, "and there, and later at Pembroke College... I was able to indulge

an addiction to Oriental languages for six years." The scholarship was for Hebrew and his studies lasted from 1932 to 1936, when he returned to the University Library as an Assistant in the Oriental Section.

Called up for military service in 1941 as a signaller, he was later transferred to the Field Security section of the Intelligence Corps and served in Germany at the end of the war. Demobilised from the Army on the last day of 1945 he returned to Cambridge University Library as an Assistant Under-Librarian.

His first marriage was dissolved and he later married Hilda Wilkinson, who was to assist fully with his bibliographical work. The demands of a growing family (he had four sons) meant that, when in 1950 he was offered the post of Librarian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, he accepted even though it meant leaving Cambridge.

At SOAS the library was only just being re-assembled after its wartime dispersal, and was housed in numerous dif-

ferent stores throughout various buildings; the staff was small, and the book-buying budget tiny. Pearson applied himself with energy to promoting the library's cause in the councils of SOAS and to securing increased staff and money to buy books. Academics going on study leave in Africa or Asia were supplied with lists of wanted titles and money to make local purchases. Gradually, in spite of accommodation problems, the library became better equipped to serve the teaching and research needs of the school.

Major expansion came with the appointment of a new Director, Sir Cyril Phillips, in 1957. Phillips appreciated the need for a strong library to underpin the special studies undertaken by SOAS, and encouraged Pearson to expand the library and its staff. He secured a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to support SOAS and among the projects was a series of country-wide surveys of manuscripts relating to Asia and Africa. These surveys were supervised by Pearson and carried out by Doreen

Wainwright and Noel Mathews and published by Oxford University Press.

Meanwhile Pearson had already begun his work on Oriental manuscripts with *Oriental Manuscript Collections in the Libraries of Great Britain and Ireland* (1954), followed later by *Oriental Manuscripts in Europe and North America: a Survey* (1971). But his principal work, *Index-Islamicus: 1906-1955* (1958), is a catalogue of periodical articles on Islamic subjects, continued in succeeding cumulations and quarterly issues, and regularly cited as "Pearson".

He was responsible for initiating the first listings of higher degrees in African and Asian studies and securing their publication; he chaired the first International Conference on African Bibliography in Nairobi in 1967 and edited the proceedings (1970) with Ruth Jones; he published a *Bibliography of Pre-Islamic Persia* (1975); revised and annotated the Asian and African entries from *Besterman's A World Bibliography of Bibliographies* (1975); edited *South Asian Bibliography: a handbook* (1979); and after retirement produced a supplementary volume (1984) to Creswell's bibliography of Islamic art and architecture, and continued to revise the Wainwright and Mathews surveys, working on them in the University Library up to a few weeks before his death. (The supplementary volumes for South and South East Asia and Africa appeared in 1989 and 1993.)

From 1959 Pearson taught a course in Oriental and African bibliography for student librarians in the School of Librarianship and Archive Studies at University College London and many of his students subsequently rose to important posts in Asia and Africa, while his lectures and seminars led to *Oriental and Asian Bibliography: an introduction with some reference to Africa* (1966), the first textbook of its kind published.

Pearson played a full part in the affairs of SOAS, serving on numerous committees and the Academic Board, but outside SOAS he was a founder of the Standing Committee

for Library Materials on Africa (SCOLMA) and subsequently its Chairman, and he was also Chairman of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL) Group of Orientalist Librarians. He was instrumental in founding other regional groups of librarians and promoting co-operation between them both nationally and world-wide.

He was the founding Chairman of the International Association of Orientalist Librarians, and attended most of the International Congresses of Orientalists until his retirement; he was Library Adviser to the Inter-University Council from 1969 to 1975, and provided much of the material for the chapter on libraries in the influential Hayter report on the development of Oriental and African studies in the UK.

Pearson gave up the librarianship of SOAS in March 1972 just as the library was about to move into its new and long-awaited building, designed by Denys Lasdun & Partners. He was first appointed Senior Research Fellow,

then to the first Chair in Bibliography "with reference to Asia and Africa" at London University. He retired from the Chair in September 1979 and moved back to Cambridge. He was appointed Professor Emeritus, made an Honorary Fellow of the Library Association in 1976 and awarded the Walford Prize for lifelong achievement in bibliography in 1992.

Jim Pearson's warmth and cheerfulness made dry meetings go with a swing, and his indefatigable energy and willingness to persevere with seemingly thankless tasks produced bibliographical works of enduring value. When SOAS library closed for Christmas each year, the party that began in the Librarian's room just before closing became an annual institutional event.

As Librarian of SOAS he was one of the great travellers, when it was unusual for librarians to move outside their libraries. All his life he retained a love of Cambridge and a keen interest in flora and natural history.

B. C. Bloomfield



James Douglas Pearson, librarian and bibliographer: born 17 December 1911; Assistant Under-Librarian, Cambridge University Library 1939-50; Librarian, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University 1950-72; Professor of Bibliography, with reference to Asia and Africa 1972-79 (Emeritus); married first Rose Betty Burden (one son; marriage dissolved); second Hilda Wilkinson (three sons); died 1 August 1997.



Dean: "Our stage is rich in actresses - the most undervalued is Isabel Dean" Photograph: Hulton Getty

In a career spanning 50 years, Isabel Dean demonstrated talent and versatility while never fulfilling the great promise initially indicated. With large eyes and classically chiselled features, she became best known as an exponent of somewhat steely patrician ladies of elegance and breeding. That she was capable of much more was demonstrated by her work on stage in both the classics and contemporary drama, but most of this was done in provincial theatres, partly no doubt because early in her career she offended "Binkie Beaumont", the West End's leading theatrical manager.

She was born Isabel Hodgkinson in Aldridge, Staffordshire, in 1918. Her first ambition was to be an art teacher. She studied painting at the Birmingham Art School and in 1937 joined the Cheltenham Repertory Company as a scenic artist. Soon she was taking both acting lessons and small parts with the company. "It was inevitable, with her ravishing looks," commented one of the company later.

After appearing with repertory companies in Brighton and Norwich, she made her London debut on 1 May 1940 as Maggie Buckley in an adaptation of Agatha Christie's thriller *Peril at End House*, following this

with a Shakespearean role, in 1956 to play Mary Dallas in the thriller *The Night of the Fourth* at the Westminster, and three years later played Miss Frost, the Catholic lodger seduced by a young student, in the hit production of *J. B. Donlevy's Love for Love* at the Phoenix.

The following year she was asked to join Gielgud's repertory company at the Haymarket, She had the principal female role in *Nigel Kneale's enormous popular blend of science-fiction and horror* *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), six 30-minute episodes which went out live, with filmed inserts. Dean played the scientist whose astronaut husband returns from a mission with an alien infection that causes him to mutate into a vegetable-like creature.

When Beaumont asked her to go with Gielgud's company to tour India, but only to play the role of the maid in Coward's *Blithe Spirit* and again to under-study *Ophelia*, she refused and Beaumont made it clear he considered her ungrateful. She never worked for his management again and made few more West End appearances. Instead she played leading roles in Oxford, Brighton and the Boltons Theatre, including a luminous

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In the theatre, she had success in several contemporary plays, including the Royal Court production of John Osborne's *A Hotel in Amsterdam* (1968), which moved into the West End, and in provincial productions of Orton's *What the Butler Saw* and John Bowen's chilling *Robin Redbreast*. She had a particularly notable triumph as Hester in Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea* (at Guildford in 1971 and Nottingham in 1972), once more following in the footsteps of Peggy Ashcroft. Her wrenching portrayal of the clergyman's daughter, married to a High Court judge, who leaves her husband to pursue a hopeless and obsessive affair with a young air-force pilot, clearly demonstrated that Dean's gifts had not always been appropriately exploited.

In 1977 she played with Gielgud, for the first time since he had been his *Ophelia*, in Julian Mitchell's *Half Life* at the National Theatre.

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searching for stories. Created and written by Dean's husband, William Fairchild, it went out twice weekly, but lasted only nine weeks. (Dean's 1953 marriage to Fairchild, who wrote such screenplays as *Morning Departure*, *The Mata Hari Story* and *Star*, was dissolved in the early Seventies.)

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Dean's film career began in 1943 with a tiny role in *The Man in Grey*. Later films included Lean's *The Passionate Friends* (1948), and Sidney Gilliat's *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan* (1953), in which she was the epitome of droll elegance as wife to Robert Morley's Gilbert. "How does it feel to be married to a transcendent genius?" asks her husband as he puts the finishing touches to *The Mikado*. "I suppose I've always taken it for granted," she replies.

In Alexander Mackendrick's *A High Wind in Jamaica*, she presented a beautiful and touching picture of Victoria's motherhood in the film's early sequences. Her last appearance on the West End stage was as the tragic mother of Alan Turing (Derek Jacobi) in Hugh Whitemore's *Breaking the Code* (1986).

A few years earlier the critic Harold Hobson had written: "Our own stage is rich in actresses of whom the chief jewel is Peggy Ashcroft - and the most undervalued is Isabel Dean."

Tom Vallance

Isabel Hodgkinson (Isabel Dean), actress: born Aldridge, Staffordshire, 29 May 1918; married 1953 William Fairchild (two daughters; marriage dissolved); died 27 July 1997.

Harold Spina

The first of the composer Harold Spina's many hits was launched by a handicapped who couldn't decide whether it was a funny song or a tragic one.

The tongue-in-cheek "Annie Doesn't Live Here Any More" (1933), which Spina wrote with Joe Young, veteran lyricist of such standards as "My Man", "You're My Everything" and "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter", and the fledgling Johnny Burke, was considered a duet by its publishers, who sent it to the bandleader Guy Lombardo in

a parcel of tunes they regarded as equally hopeless. Although unsure whether the song would make people laugh or cry, Lombardo asked the publishers if he could have it exclusively for six weeks. They replied, "You can have it for six years!" In less than three weeks, the number became a nationwide hit.

Like Lombardo, America was divided about "Annie": college students and big-city types found it funny, while those in the hinterlands thought it poignant; its ending ("She was on-so faithful - what a pitiful

sight! / Waited for a letter that you promised to write. / A gentleman with a top hat called around the other night, / And Annie doesn't live here any more") led many to think Annie had died of a broken heart, and that the top-hatted gentleman was not a rich lover, but an underworker.

Obsessed with music from an early age, Spina led his own high-school dance band at 14. Soon after graduation he became a pianist and vocal arranger for a music publishing firm in his native New York, turning full-time composer in

1932. After the success of "Annie Doesn't Live Here Any More", he and Johnny Burke turned out a dozen songs, including "It's Dark on Observatory Hill" (1934) and the Fats Waller hit "You're Not the Only Oyster in the Stew" (1934). "You're So Darn Charming" and "My Very Good Friend the Milkman" (both 1935).

The partnership ended in 1936, when Burke left for Hollywood to write for Bing Crosby. In 1937 Spina too went west; with Walter Bullock he wrote the score for United Artists' *25th Street* (1937), a te-

levision musical whose title invited invidious comparison with Warner Bros' *42nd Street* (1933). After being signed by 20th Century-Fox, Spina and Bullock provided songs for the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), 1972; Geraldo Ford succeeded Richard Nixon as 38th US President, 1974; Deaths Allan Aldridge, 1974; John Gielgud, 1975; Sir Lawrence Byford, management consultant, 1975; Mrs Leila Campbell, former Chairman, UELA, 1976; General Sir George Cooper, former Chief Royal Engineer, 1976; Eddie Fisher, singer, 1976; Miss Rhonda Fleming, actress, 1976; Professor Alexander Goehr, composer, 1976; Sir Alan Hardcastle, chairman, Lloyd's Regulatory Board, 1976; Professor Adrian Harris, clinical oncologist, 1976; Mr Roy Keane, footballer, 1976; Mr Leonard Lickona, former Director-General, British Telecommunications, 1976; Mrs Barbara Mills QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, 1976; Miss Kate O'Mara, actress, 1976; Mr David Rowland, chairman of Lloyd's, 1976; Sir Richard St. John, 1976; Michael Haydn, composer, 1976; Edward William Lane, translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*, 1976. On this day the Scots died at the English at the Battle of Otterburn, 1388; the Mines Act prohibited women and young children from working under ground, 1912; the first Promenade Concert was given (by Sir Edward Elgar) 1912; Allan Aldridge, 1974; Deaths Allan Aldridge, 1974; John Gielgud, 1975; Sir Lawrence Byford, management consultant, 1975; Mrs Leila Campbell, former Chairman, UELA, 1976; General Sir George Cooper, former Chief Royal Engineer, 1976; Eddie Fisher, singer, 1976; Miss Rhonda Fleming, actress, 1976; Professor Alexander Goehr, composer, 1976; Sir Alan Hardcastle, chairman, Lloyd's Regulatory Board, 1976; Professor Adrian Harris, clinical oncologist, 1976; Mr Roy Keane, footballer, 1976; Mr Leonard Lickona, former Director-General, British Telecommunications, 1976; Mrs Barbara Mills QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, 1976; Miss Kate O'Mara, actress, 1976; Mr David Rowland, chairman of Lloyd's, 1976; Sir Richard St. John, 1976; Michael Haydn, composer, 1976; Edward William Lane, translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*, 1976.

Truth commissions are not a new idea. They have already been used in Latin America as a way of dealing with gross human rights violations after a civil conflict has ended. Such bodies are empowered to grant an amnesty to criminals who confess fully to their actions and can prove that they were politically motivated. Mercy and reconciliation being at the forefront of their philosophy, truth commissions have proved attractive to many church leaders. Archbishop Desmond Tutu chairs the South African commission.

But justice is a gospel imperative too. What happens when the two seem to clash? By allowing murderers and torturers to walk free, truth commissions raise fundamental questions about what is meant by justice. This has become of more than academic interest in Britain over the past two decades, when the word "justice" was increasingly narrowed to mean punishment of the criminal. The populist response to the James Bulger and Myra Hindley cases has given the impression that the severity of punishment should not be the prerogative of an independent criminal justice system but a direct reflection

equally corny *Honeychile* (1951) and *The Wac from Walla Walla* (1952) with others providing the words.

In 1950 Dinah Shore had a hit single with Spina's "It's So Nice to Have a Man Around the House". Jack Elliott wrote the lyric, which ended with the cynical "Though it's two to one you'll wind up with a louse". Pat Price had a million-seller with "Would I Love You?" (1951), which Spina wrote with Bob Russell. Soon afterwards, the composer became his own lyricist; his "Lazy Summer Night" (1958) was a leading record for

the Four Preps. He also provided both words and music for "The Velvet Glove" (

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OF THE YEAR

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Pound's plunge prompts shift from blue chips

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

The pound plunged on the foreign exchange markets yesterday as currency traders responded to a hint from the Bank of England on Thursday that no further interest rate rises were necessary in the short term.

On the stock market, the fall in sterling prompted a shift out of the high-flying FTSE 100 index of leading companies into exporters and other second-line stocks that have missed out on the market's surge.

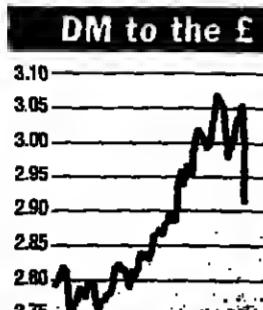
Sterling tumbled another 5 pence to DM2.92, 14 pence or almost 5 per cent down on its recent high of DM3.06 against the German currency.

The fall was a continuing reaction to comments from the Bank of England, as it raised base rates for the fourth time in as many months, that the cost of money was now consistent with its inflation target.

The Bank's carefully worded statement, accompanying the rise in base rate from 6.75 to 7 per cent, was seen as a clever way of keeping the lid on consumer spending while at the same time avoiding the collateral damage to industry of a sky-high pound. Despite its success, economists said yesterday they did not expect the Bank to make a habit of talking the pound up or down.

Sterling's fall, after its dramatic 25 per cent rise since the beginning of the year, gave a shot in the arm to the FTSE 250 index of medium-sized stocks, which closed 52.3 points higher at 4650.5 compared with a 55.5-point fall in the FTSE 100, which closed at 5,031.3.

The leading index was driven lower by Wall Street, which traded sharply lower as investors fretted about reports due next week on inflation and retail sales. Worries that inter-



flation Report and the minutes of last month's meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee.

Beneficiaries of the pound's fall yesterday included engineers Smiths Industries, Lucas Varity and GKN, as well as building stocks such as Blue Circle and RMC, which are among the stocks most vulnerable to movements in interest rates.

The Bank of England was only given the freedom to set interest rates in May, since when it has nudged the rate upwards four times. Its advice to increase rates had been consistently ignored for months by former Conservative Chancellor Kenneth Clarke in the run-up to the general election.

According to Alison Cottrell, chief economist at Paine Webber: "The Bank of England has only now got to where it is happy, its neutral starting point with interest rates."

She added: "They moved in slow steps, but this built the expectation that they would do another small step every time. They've said, 'In case you are worried, we think we've got to where we want to be now.' It's quite comforting, because it implies that had they thought they needed a half-point increase, they would have done it."

Despite the hint from the Bank that it would hold off for few months before raising rates again, most economists still expect base rates to rise again with some believing the peak in the current cycle could be as high as 8.5 per cent.

The Bank did not receive universal praise for its intervention.

Richard Jeffreys, group economist at Charterhouse, said: "I think there is a great danger that when policymakers get involved in currency markets they tend to come off worst. The currency market is allowed to find its own level."

One trader said: "I expect to see more switching into 250 stocks, but remember that this is the silly season when the market is more vulnerable to erratic moves."

The markets will have to contend with a stream of economic data in the next week, with Monday's producer price numbers followed by retail prices on Tuesday and unemployment and average earnings figures midweek. Also on Wednesday, the Bank of England will issue its quarterly In-

Takeover-spotting keeps bank sector on the boil

Tom Stevenson believes there are good reasons for the re-rating – in spite of competition worries

of funds it has been viewed as in the past.

But what has surprised some analysts in the past two weeks is the extent in which share prices, which should already have factored in much of that good news, have continued to rise despite a set of results that have been good but not stunningly so. Barclays, for example, reported a modest 8 per cent rise in underlying profits but saw its shares add the best part of 10 per cent on the day of its results.

What appears to have happened is a shift in focus from the sector – where there are quite serious worries about the incursion of the former building societies and a persistent squeeze on margins – to its potential for consolidation.

Investors are increasingly looking for the next takeover candidate, regardless of its underlying prospects.

That consolidation needs to take place has been clear for a number of years, but it has taken the movement of the former building societies into product lines traditionally seen as the preserve of the clearing

banks to concentrate minds on the over-supply of banks on British high streets.

Another interesting feature of the reporting season has been the extent to which generalities about the banks have become invalid.

The seven banks in the table below are producing very different returns on their capital because they have become very different sorts of companies. The forces driving a global player such as HSBC are plainly very different from those driving Lloyds TSB, which has made a conscious and successful decision to focus on the retail side of the domestic market.

The star of the season was undoubtedly Lloyds TSB, where the potential for further cost-cutting from the merger of its constituent parts in 1998 continues to boost expectations.

It has avoided the temptation of battling it out in the competitive investment banking world and seen its return on capital soar to a massive 40 per cent as a result.

At Barclays, the battle to turn

BZW around appears to have been won and the return on

equity at the investment bank of 12 per cent, while hardly better than its cost of capital, is at least moving in the right direction.

Barclays is banding bucketloads of cash back to shareholders, arguably not what its management is paid to do but better than squandering it in the past.

HSBC and Standard Chartered march to a different tune and both in different ways are making a success of their overseas franchises. Standard cashed in on the currency turbulence in South-east Asia. HSBC continues to benefit from the booming economies of Asia and is

building up a meaningful franchise in Latin America.

The black sheep of the sector continues to be NatWest, although its plight appears to have been exaggerated by a press that has scented blood.

Certainly its investment banking arm is still in trouble, returning just 2.4 per cent on its capital, but what NatWest appears to have got most wrong is to allow its losses to get such a firm grip. Its biggest error has been to allow itself to look weak when, all allow, its rivals were looking stronger than perhaps they really are.

Importantly, capital is being managed as a scarce resource rather than as the "free" source

of funds it has been viewed as in the past.

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MICHAEL HARRISON

'Raging against so-called excess might make good copy but at what point does it spill over into a more general antipathy towards business as a whole and the pursuit of profit?'

Nagging doubts about Labour 100 days on

Labour reaches the end of its first 100 days in power in an unfamiliar position. On the defensive. The loss of the Uxbridge by-election, Robin Cook's marital break-up, the Gordon McMaster suicide and the mishandled affair of Lord Simon's BP shareholding have conspired to present a picture of a Government less in control than it has to be. To top it all, interest rates have just gone up for the fourth time since Tony Blair took office, increasing the payment on the average mortgage by £40 a month.

Harold Macmillan had an explanation for the sort of quicksand Labour has suddenly run into. Asked once what hardest thing to handle in government, he replied: 'Events, dear boy, events.'

Well, the events of the last 10 days bear out that adage. If they make Labour appear more human as a party, more fallible as a government, perhaps that is no bad thing. The stage-managed, news-managed, Mandelsonised way Labour has conducted itself since 1 May has begun to wear a little thin. It has encouraged those who argue Labour is more about style than substance, that it prefers slogans to policies. The critics think they have exposed a 'rhetoric gap' between its words and actions.

Labour's response, unfortunately, has been to come up with another gimmick wrapped in a slogan. Mr Blair, we were told yesterday, is going to produce an annual report so that the 'shareholders of Britain

plc' can see how well Labour's performance is measuring up to its promises.

This is an irrelevance. Worse still, it distracts attention from the real substantive progress Labour has made, notably in economic management, but also in the regulation of the City, the implementation of competition policy and its commitment to tackle unemployment.

No one could seriously accuse Gordon Brown of not having had a seismic impact since taking over as Chancellor. The decision to give the Bank of England operational independence to set interest rates ranks as one of the most significant constitutional changes since the War.

The jury is still out on how well the policy is working and will remain so until well into next year. It will take until then to reach a judgment on whether the strategy of gently nudging up interest rates a quarter point at a time has succeeded in keeping the cost of borrowing lower than it otherwise might have been, while still delivering a soft landing for the economy.

There is a legitimate fear that it will produce a stand-off between monetary and fiscal policy, encouraging expectations of higher rates and thereby pushing the pound to unsustainable levels. That concern was fuelled by the very modest personal tax increases announced in the Budget at the expense of higher taxes on business. Until this week, the ammunition was mounting.

The decision to replace the Monopolies

and Mergers Commission with a more broadly based Competition Commission and grant the Office of Fair Trading new powers to fine companies engaged in cartels or anti-competitive agreements are also a step forward. The previous government pledged to do much the same but never quite found the Parliamentary time.

Similarly, the decision to strip away the Bank's responsibility for banking supervision and bring it under one roof along with all the other City regulatory bodies marks a change. The creation of super-SIB is certainly the most significant regulatory change since the 1986 Financial Services Act.

There are questions about how this new overarching body will work. There is a worry that the advantages gained from bringing separate regulatory functions together will be negated by the unwieldy and bureaucratic nature that emerges.

There will be ample scope for power battles and there will be plenty of room for empire building, especially given the size of the new headquarters the super-SIB is hunting for. But no one can argue with the boldness of the strategy.

As far as competition policy is concerned, the reassurance, initially at least, came in what the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, promised not to do. There would, she said, be no change in the burden of proof in takeover cases nor any change in the policy of vetting mergers on the basis of their impact on competition.

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Raging against such so-called excess might make good copy but at what point does it spill over into a more general antipathy towards business as a whole and the pursuit of profit? Despite her policy statements, Mrs Beckett seems to be intent on referring or blocking every merger that lands on her desk, not always with the backing of her competition experts. This is to protect consumers or is it really because she dislikes corporate activity?

The Chancellor has spoken often and at length about how New Labour will foster enterprise and sweep away barriers to growth and productivity. But in his attempt to be more 'businesslike' by dressing down both for the Mansion House speech and the annual CBI dinner, was he really betraying his latent distrust, even dislike, of the City?

The one consolation is that the Conservatives have scarcely won any more business friends during Labour's first 100 days. The attack on such a distinguished businessman as Lord Simon may have drawn blood. But in doing so the Tories seem to have completely forgotten which side their bread is buttered on.

Byatt warns on water companies' dividend payouts

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The privatised water companies could face further action from the industry regulator after failing to disclose sufficient information about their generous dividend payouts.

In another sign of his increasing concern at recent substantial hikes in dividends, Ian Byatt, the regulator, attacked the companies yesterday for paying 'scant attention' to financial figures in their annual submissions to Ofwat, the water watchdog.

He also raised the spectre of tougher price controls from 2000, by suggesting the companies were setting aside too much cash from their profits to cover depreciation charges. A similar argument was used by Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, in her long-running dispute with British Gas over pipeline charges.

Mr Byatt has written to all the large water and sewerage groups asking them to submit special reports on dividends and depreciation by next month. He warned that if they continued to fail to explain the way dividends between the main regulated utility businesses and the quoted holding companies were calculated, he

would inset tougher provisions in their operating licences.

Each year the companies make annual returns to Ofwat giving detailed operating results for their main regulated water and sewage businesses. But Mr Byatt said the latest set of data did not clearly show the flows of money between different parts of their businesses.

'The water companies need to articulate their dividend policy at the time of their public results. I'm not saying that there's been no progress on this issue since I first made my concerns known, but it hasn't been good enough,' Mr Byatt said.

He added that he wanted to see companies provide greater detail on regulated dividends at their next set of results for the six months to the end of September, to be published at the end of the year. 'I'm not saying I want to control dividends, but I'm equally determined to get better transparency.'

At the last set of annual results most water groups reported unexpectedly large rises in dividends, typically in the high teens. South West Water's increased by 20.3 per cent, while Thames water's payout soared by 22 per cent.

Most pointed to customer rebate schemes or increases in discretionary investment pro-

grammes as a sign that consumers were sharing in the distribution alongside investors. But the level of information about dividends paid by the core regulated businesses, the main source of earnings, varied widely between the companies.

The additional concern over depreciation charges came after Ofwat found the companies were setting aside much bigger sums for depreciation than the amount of cash spent on maintaining the assets themselves. A larger depreciation charge would artificially reduce profits at a time when the companies are negotiating the next price review. Mr Byatt has already called for a substantial one-off drop in customer bills.

Separately, Ofwat yesterday approved the second move towards water competition, with a plan by Anglian Water to service business customers outside its own region. Anglian will take over a sewage treatment works on the former RAF Farningham base near Doncaster, which is due to be developed in a housing estate. The base is in Severn Trent's sewerage area.

Earlier this year Anglian won the first so-called 'inset appointment', taking over the provision of water to a chicken plant supplied by a neighbouring drinking water company.

TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line + more investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency will be devalued against the mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in ten years' time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so that line will move away from the base.

Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the dotted baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.

Long term interest rates

Percentage points

+2

Italy

UK

Spain

Ireland

Germany

France

May June July Aug

TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line + more investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency will be devalued against the mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in ten years' time.

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Who will be in EMU? The City Analysts' View

The independent asked analysts from

Alpha Europe, PaineWebber, ABN Amro, Dresdner, Morgan Stanley, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, James Capel, UBS

what probability they placed on EMU starting on time.

Probability EMU starts on time: 65% (53% last week)

Probability EMU delayed: 32% (32% last week)

Probability EMU never happens: 3% (5% last week)

German spanner in EMU works

Magnus Grimond

The consensus that monetary union will go ahead on time in 1999 weakened further this week, with attention continuing to focus on the Germans.

Rumours, later squashed, that Chancellor Helmut Kohl had died of a heart attack hit sentiment, coming on top of worries stemming from the failure of his tax reform measures. Even so, most observers' optimism still centres on what the Bundesbank will do with interest rates in the next few weeks.

Julian Jessop of Nikko Europe says speculation about an imminent announcement has been a little overcooked, but he still expects an increase to come in September or October.

Even an uptick of as little as 0.1 per cent would be psychologically significant, coming as the first rise for five years. That could throw a spanner into the EMU works, particularly for investors who have made fat profits on the reducing yield gap between the Mediterranean currencies and Germany.

Stephen King of James Capel is more sanguine about the impact of higher rates, pointing out that German money costs are still well below the 4 per cent or so indicated as required after a European monetary area comes into effect. 'But politically, it could stiffen rising resistance to EMU within Germany.'

IN BRIEF

Fraud alert issued as EU Bank collapses

European Union Bank, which claimed to be the first offshore bank to offer services over the Internet, has collapsed. Based in Antigua, EU Bank was set up in 1994 and last October was included in a Bank of England warning of the potential dangers of deposits with offshore institutions. Coopers & Lybrand's Antigua arm has been appointed to investigate what went wrong and the Antigua Office of National Drugs and Money Laundering Policy has issued a fraud alert. No British depositors are thought to have been affected.

Nomura fined £1.1m over racketeers

Nomura Securities was fined a total of £1.1m (€1.1m) by the Japan Securities Dealers Association and the Tokyo Stock Exchange over its illegal trading activities on behalf of *sokai* racketeers. The Japanese Securities Dealers Association, which fined Nomura the maximum ¥100m said it had asked all publicly listed securities companies to strengthen supervisory measures. And it has revised its articles to penalise similar violations to cover all securities trading, not just equities, adding that it will penalise similar infringements by banks and insurers in the future.

Memory announces cash-raising move

Memory Corporation, the beleaguered computer chip maker, announced plans to raise more money, probably via a rights issue or placing. The move comes after a disastrous 18 months for the group, which has seen its shares go into freefall and its value fall from more than £350m to just £18m. Memory also announced a tie-up with Micron Technology, a US manufacturer of computer chips, to produce Flash memory cards for digital cameras. Memory raised more than £4m when it floated in December 1994 but that was £1.1m. It has been hit by the plunge in the computer chip prices but managed to reduce losses for the six months to June to £1.2m, compared with a loss of £3.1m in the previous year.

Vickers sells Jered Brown for \$14m

Vickers has sold substantially all of the business and assets of the Jered Brown Brothers in the US to Jered Industries, a new company formed by a private investment group and members of the subsidiary's management for \$14.3m (£9m). Jered Brown Brothers, which specialises in naval and commercial systems design, engineering, manufacturing and services, was acquired by Vickers in 1990.

Oftel to let businesses decide numbers

Oftel, the UK telecommunications regulator, plans to give businesses more choice and control over their telecoms numbering arrangements. Don Cruickshank, director-general of Telecommunications, said that under the plans businesses and large public organisations can choose to move to the '05' range of telephone numbers. 'These plans are in response to clear customer demand,' he said. Companies would be allocated blocks of numbers direct and would be able to decide how to use them across the organisation. The scheme is primarily intended for organisations who operate extensive multi-site networks, although smaller companies will also be able to use it. 'Calls to 05 numbers would be capped at no more than the national rate, though in most cases it should cost less than this.' The 05 range should be introduced by 1999.

Buy-back plans boost Biotechnology

Biotechnology Investments, the Guernsey-based investment company managed by Rothschild Asset Management, proposes to buy back up to 15 per cent of its 55.5 million shares in issue in an attempt to raise the share price, which on Thursday stood at a discount of around 25 per cent to net asset value. The shares jumped 20p to 335.5p on the news, reducing the discount by 5 percentage points. The fund has suffered from the relatively dull performance of biotechnology stocks this year.

Abbey raises mortgage rates

Abbey National is raising its standard variable mortgage rate by 0.25 percentage points following this week's increase in interest rates. The increase takes effect from Monday for new borrowers and from 1 September for existing customers. The mortgage rate for £60,000 will be 8.45 per cent and 8.35 per cent for £100,000. Increases in savings and investment rates will be announced shortly.

Digital TV launch faces delays

Chris Godsmark

The consortium formed by British Sky Broadcasting and British Telecom may be forced to postpone next year's launch of a digital satellite television service because of delays in gaining approval from regulators in the UK and Europe.

Investors in the service, called British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB), fear the European Commission is taking much longer than expected to give the go-ahead, which would involve injecting £265m into the consortium to subsidise the cost of the set-top boxes that decode programmes.

British Sky broadcasting will use the technology to launch a

digital television service in the spring, with the full interactive home shopping and educational services across the European Union.

Though Oftel, the UK telecommunications watchdog, is thought to be closer to approving the scheme, it has also not reached a final conclusion. The partners, BT, BSkyB, the Midland Bank and the Panamanian parent group Matsushita, had hoped to hear from all the regulators involved by the middle of this month.

The Independent Television Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry are also involved.

An industry source said it looked as though the EC would not reach a decision until late

September at the earliest and time was 'critical' for BIB to meet the spring deadline.

Electronics groups which intend to make the set-top boxes, fed by Matsushita, have been unable to invest in production facilities until the regulators give BIB the go-ahead. More time would then be needed to test the systems and distribute the boxes to retailers.

A BIB spokesman yesterday insisted the launch dates for both the television and interactive services would not be put back.

He added: 'If we want to delay it by a month or two then we can, but at the moment we are working to the original schedule.'

Holland & Barrett sale raises healthy £100m

Nigel Cope

City Correspondent

Holland & Barrett, one of Britain's best-known health food retailers, has been sold to an American group for £100m.

NBTY, formed in 1960 as Natures Bounty in 1960, has bought the chain from Gehe, the German pharmaceuticals group which acquired it as part of the Lloyds Chemists deal in January.

A BIB spokesman yesterday insisted the launch dates for both the television and interactive services would not be put back.

He added: 'If we want to

raise the UK health food market by US groups. General Nutrition Centres is also expanding in the UK, though from a smaller base.

Holland & Barrett has 402 shops and last year achieved profits of £8.2m on sales of £110m. NBTY plans to continue the

PHILIPS
ECOTONE



THE INDEPENDENT

Pick your team to take you to the World Cup Finals

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

With the new league season now underway, a vast array of footballing talent is on parade for the first time. Arsenal and Chelsea have been the busiest clubs in the overseas market, with Marc Overmars the most expensive recruit. The two London clubs can be expected to mount a strong challenge. Liverpool and Newcastle United will also be fighting for the title. However, Alex Ferguson's men will again be the team to beat. With the signings of Teddy Sheringham and Celia Silva from Brazil they are again the bookmakers' favourites to win the title.

Can you keep up with the changes? The Independent and Independent on Sunday are giving you the chance. With a budget of £40 million, can you come up with a team to top them all in the Premiership this season?

HOW TO ENTER.

Firstly you will need to pick your team formation, of course there's your goalkeeper plus you have a choice of four formations for the others in your team.

FORMATION A. 4-4-2 4 Defenders, 4 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION B. 4-3-3 4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers

FORMATION C. 5-3-2 5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION D. 3-5-2 3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

Once you have chosen your formation and team name pick your team of 11 players and 1 manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under. Players and their total value must not go over £40 million. Having made a note of your team dial our registration hotline. Please try to use a tone telephone - one which makes tone noises when you dial, although pulse telephones can be used to register your team.



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The overall winner, the manager who at the end of the season accrues more points than any other will win a trip to the 1998 World Cup in France. With a companion, they will see all the action of a quarter-final and semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's home internationals at Wembley.

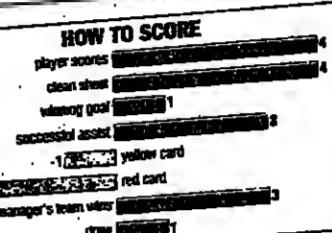
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Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

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INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)
GOALKEEPERS											
300 Seaman	Ars	4.0	455 Cox	Bol	2.5	560 Lundekvam	Sou	1.2	679 Sharpe	Lee	3.5
303 Lukic	Ars	1.0	456 Elliot	Bol	3.0	563 Scales	Tot	3.4	680 Riheiro	Lee	1.5
304 Manning	Ars	3.0	458 Taggart	Bol	2.0	564 Campbell	Tot	4.0	683 Haaland	Lee	2.5
305 Bosolich	AV	4.0	459 Bergssoo	Bol	1.5	565 Calderwood	Tot	2.9	684 Parker	Lei	2.5
306 Oakes	AV	1.5	460 Duerry	Chel	3.0	566 Austin	Tot	2.2	685 Taylor	Lei	2.1
307 Watson	Bar	1.0	463 Petrescu	Chel	3.0	567 Edinburgh	Tot	1.6	686 Izzett	Lei	3.2
308 Lesse	Bar	1.0	464 Lamourde	Chel	3.0	568 Carr	Tot	1.2	687 Leonon	Lei	1.7
309 Flowers	Bla	5.2	465 Lehoef	Chel	5.0	569 Mahbatt	Tot	1.5	688 Guppy	Lei	3.0
330 Filan	Bla	1.5	466 Sinclair	Chel	2.5	570 Dicks	WH	3.5	689 Barnes	Liv	5.2
333 Branagan	Bol	1.2	467 Daish	Cov	2.7	571 Rieper	WH	2.7	690 Redknapp	Liv	5.9
334 De Goye	Che	1.0	468 Shaw	Cov	2.2	572 Hall	WH	3.0	691 McManaman	Liv	3.0
335 Grodas	Che	1.0	469 Burrows	Cov	2.2	573 Potts	WH	1.5	692 Thomas	Liv	7.4
336 Ogrizovic	Cov	2.2	470 Haworth	Cov	1.5	574 Ferdinand	WH	2.5	693 Leonhardsen	Liv	4.0
337 Hedman	Cov	1.0	471 Edworthy	CP	1.5	575 Impey	WH	2.2	694 Giggs	Man	7.0
338 Nash	CP	1.0	472 Gordon	CP	2.0	576 Turner	WH	2.0	695 Beckham	Man	7.0
339 Day	CP	1.0	473 Muscat	CP	1.0	577 Perry	Wim	4.0	696 Keane	Man	7.0
340 Poom	Der	1.2	474 Tuttle	CP	2.0	578 Taylor	AV	3.2	697 Butt	Mao	7.0
343 Houl	Der	1.6	475 Linighan	CP	2.0	579 Cunningham	Wim	1.5	698 Driscoll	Der	5.5
344 Southall	Eve	3.0	476 Roberts	CP	3.0	580 Burrows	Wim	2.0	699 Pohorski	Man	3.5
345 Gerrard	Eve	1.5	477 Hredresson	CP	1.0	581 Cunningham	Wim	1.5	700 Pohorski	New	3.6
346 Martyn	Lee	3.3	478 Stimate	Der	3.3	582 Thatchar	Wim	1.5	701 Batty	New	3.8
347 Beeney	Lee	1.2	479 Gordons	Der	1.8	583 McAllister	Wim	1.5	702 Gillespie	New	2.5
348 Keller	Lei	2.5	480 Powell	Der	1.5	584 Kimble	Wim	1.5	703 Anderson	Der	2.0
349 Poole	Lei	1.5	481 Draper	Der	1.5	585 Townsend	AV	3.2	704 Beardsley	New	2.0
350 James	Liv	3.5	482 Bilek	Der	1.8	586 Draper	AV	4.1	705 Blinker	SW	2.5
353 Warner	Liv	1.0	483 Eranio	Der	2.5	587 Marcelle	Bar	2.0	706 Hyde	SW	1.8
354 Schmeichel	Man	5.5	484 Phelan	Eve	1.9	588 Bullock	Bar	1.2	707 Whittingham	SW	1.7
355 Van Der Gouw	Man	1.2	485 Short	Eve	3.0	589 Redfearn	Bar	1.5	708 Carbone	SW	3.0
356 Given	New	2.5	486 Watson	Eve	2.7	590 Taylor	AV	1.9	709 Magilton	Sou	2.4
357 Hislop	New	2.5	487 Dorigo	Lee	2.5	591 Tinkler	Bar	1.2	710 Oakley	Sou	1.5
358 Pressman	SW	3.0	488 Robertson	Lee	2.5	592 Wilcox	Bla	3.0	711 Anderson	Tot	6.0
359 Taylor	Sou	1.8	489 Walsh	Lei	2.2	593 Driscoll	Bla	3.0	712 Arderton	Tot	3.5
360 Beasant	Sou	1.0	490 Whitlow	Lei	1.2	594 Eaden	Bar	1.2	713 Blinder	SW	1.8
363 Walker	Tot	3.4	491 Elliott	Lei	1.2	595 Frandsen	Bol	1.2	714 Hyde	SW	1.7
364 Bardsen	Tot	1.0	492 Elliott	Lei	1.2	596 Ruddock	Bol	1.2	715 Whittingham	SW	3.0
365 Miklosko	WH	1.5	493 Driscoll	Lei	1.2	597 Harkness	Bol	1.2	716 Carbone	SW	3.0
366 Sullivan	Wim	2.7	494 Wilcock	Lei	2.5	598 Sellars	Bol	1.5	717 Magilton	Sou	2.4
DEFENDERS											
400 Dixon	Ars	2.5	508 Bjarneby	Liv	2.5	599 Wilcock	Bla	2.2	718 Fox	Tot	3.5
403 Upson	Ars	2.0	509 Bjorneby	Liv	2.5	600 McKinlay	Bla	3.4	719 Howells	Tot	3.2
404 Petit	Ars	4.2	510 Matteo	Liv	3.0	601 Sherwood	Bla	3.0	720 Ginola	Tot	3.5
405 Grimandi	Ars	2.7	511 McAtee	Liv	3.7	602 Hughes	Chel	1.0	721 Sinton	Tot	3.0
406 Winterthurn	Ars	2.5	512 G Neville	Man	4.2	603 Wise	Chel	2.4	722 Nielsen	Tot	2.5
407 Bould	Ars	2.5	513 P Neville	Man	4.2	604 Newton	Chel	1.0	723 Tissier	Sou	2.0
408 Adams	Ars	4.5	514 Irwin	Man	2.5	605 Baheyo	Chel	3.0	724 Evans	Sou	1.5
409 Keown	Ars	4.5	515 Pallister	Man	3.0	606 Thompson	Chel	2.8	725 Ostenstad	Sou	3.2
430 Staunton	AV	3.0	516 May	Man	3.5	607 Pollock	Chel	1.2	726 Humphreys	She	2.5
433 Southgate	AV	5.2	517 Johnsen	Man	3.5	608 Sellars	Chel	4.4	727 Booth	She	3.5
434 Ehiogu	AV	3.0	518 Silva	Man	3.5	609 Gullitt	Chel	5.0	728 Hirst	She	3.5
435 Nelson	AV	1.2	519 Alheit	New	4.1	610 Di Matteo	Chel	3.7	729 Le Tissier	Sou	2.0
436 Wright	AV	3.0	520 Howey	New	3.7	611 Newton	Chel	2.0	730 Evans	Sou	1.5
437 Scimica	AV	2.2	521 Peacock	New	3.0	612 Telfer	Chel	1.8	731 Ostenstad	Sou	3.2
438 Grayson	AV	2.2	522 Barton	New	3.3	613 Richardson					

Parisian Lady a high flier

A sprinter trained on a mountain top can reach a hat-trick of victories at Newmarket today. Greg Wood reports

There is little point denying that the athletes on the minds of many punters this afternoon will be the ones in football boots kicking off a new season, something which those in charge of the racing programme seem to have acknowledged with two relatively low-key televised meetings, but for one small trainer from north Devon, it could be the most rewarding day of his short career.

Tony Newcombe will saddle Parisian Lady in the Sweet Estates Stakes at Newmarket, and victory for the filly who cost him just 2,000 guineas as a yearling would be a priceless advertisement for his 30-horse yard near Barnstaple.

If Newmarket is the head-quarters of Flat racing, then Barnstaple is about as out-of-the-way as it is possible to get, and the nearest Flat track to Newcombe's yard is 130 miles distant, but he would not have it any other way. "People keep telling me I should move if I want to progress in the racing world," he said yesterday. "I tell them that if I did that, I'd be giving away my No 1 weapon."

That vital advantage is the ability to train his horses at all

altitude, a traditional technique among human athletes but one neglected for thoroughbreds, no doubt because the top of a mountain is not an ideal location for a racing yard.

"We're 900 feet above sea level," Newcombe says, "but we also get a warm breeze from the Gulf Stream, and we seem to have got an oasis which pro-

duces freak blood counts in our horses. They have a very high level of haemoglobin, which means that there's a lot of oxygen in their blood, and we've done particularly well with staying horses because of it."

Staying was never going to be Parisian Lady's game, however. A daughter of the sprinter Paris House, she also has Group-win-

ning blood on her dam's side, which makes it all the more surprising that she could have been bought so cheaply.

"She was a hit leggy," Newcombe recalls, "and people didn't really take a shine to her, but there was nothing wrong with her and with that sort of pedigree, we thought it was worth taking the chance."

Holland wins a Free-for-all

Darryll Holland is now just two off his career-best season score of 71 winners, which he notched in 1995, after scoring an 18-fold aboard Running Free and Atlantic Desire at Salisbury yesterday.

Atlantic Desire, having his third outing in eight days after finishing third at Goodwood last Friday and winning Ripon on Monday was quickly sent out in front by Holland in the Cheviot Limited Stakes before pulling out all the stops in the closing stages to hold off the challenge of Rapier by a length.

"She's had three quick races but she's as game as a pebble," said trainer Mark Johnston's representative Bill Brown.

Martin Felthorston-Godley

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: *Cosmic Prince*
(Newmarket 4.10)
NB: *Sandcliffe*
(Newmarket 3.05)

had almost given up with Running Free but the gelding has now netted two wins in the past month.

Miliriz had run well on his seasonal bow on the Wiltshire course in May but was a dismal flop on his next outing at York last month.

Holland has run well on his seasonal bow on the Wiltshire course in May but was a dismal flop on his next outing at York last month.

His judgement was vindicated after just 71 seconds of Parisian Lady's racing career, when she repaid her purchase price with victory in a Salisbury maiden at 33-1, breaking the track record in the process.

"Next time up," her trainer says, "she hammered four good horses by nine lengths. The firm ground at Newmarket will suit her. She's got a big chance."

The locally-trained Eloquent will be a difficult opponent, but PARISIAN LADY (nap, 3.35) has impressed on the clock in both her starts, and the first day of the football season would be an appropriate moment for her to complete her hat-trick.

Handicaps form the remainder of the televised card at headquarters, where *Cosmic Prince* (4.10) and *Farmost* (4.40) hold strong chances, and two-thirds



Mick Easterby: heavy fine

of the action from Haydock.

Among the favourites for the five-furlong *Coronet* Handicap will be *Blessingindisguise*, whose trainer, Mick Easterby, was fined £2,500 by the Jockey Club earlier this week in connection with a ooo-trier offence, a financial scandal which would be all but erased by success for his runner today. Another runner who comes into

the race after three wins on the trot may frustrate him, however, since *Fairy Prince* (next best 3.50) has crept in on a very attractive mark.

The feature race at Haydock is the Group Three Rose of Lancaster Stakes, which should be a straightforward assignment for *Germano* (3.15). Geoff Wragg's colt was beaten a neck in a Listed race at Newbury last time out, a solid performance which gives him every chance in what appears to be a field consisting mainly of horses in various stages of decline. In the earlier handicap, meanwhile, *Terminus* (2.45) can break a losing streak which has much more to do with misfortune than lack of ability on his part.

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ble to retain his title
er
Kipketer
strolls to
800m
victory

Youthful Rose ready to blossom

A Briton will become the youngest golfer in Walker Cup history today. Andy Farrell, in New York, found him in confident mood

Youth being the flavour of the sporting moment, Great Britain and Ireland set about their defence of the Walker Cup with the youngest player ever to compete in the biennial transatlantic competition. Just as Rose is today 10 days past his 17th birthday but the does not stop him being a key member of a side which also contains the 44-year-old Open silver medal winner Barclay Howard.

Rose is younger than Ronan Rafferty, Peter Baker and the American Roland MacKenzie, who were all also 17 when they played in the two-day amateur version of the Ryder Cup. Tall and strong but also mature beyond his years, Rose, who left school last year with eight GCSEs, has been groomed for his occasion almost like Tiger Woods.

Photographic evidence exists of Rose, who was born in South Africa of English parents, using plastic clubs and balls at 11 months. He does not remember, but he does recall breaking 70 for nine holes for the first time. He was five. "Dad would give me little targets," Rose said, "and would give me a train set or something if when I did them."

In this, his first summer as a full-time amateur, Rose won the St Andrews Links Trophy. "At the start of the season I felt it was unrealistic to make the Walker Cup, but it was what I wanted to achieve. All the tournaments I played were mapped out to try to get into the team." His selection became inevitable. Peter McEvoy, the former British Amateur champion who played against Sandy Lyle and Nick Faldo before they turned pro, says Rose is better than either of those two at his age.

"His maturity is what strikes you," said Gary Wolstenholme, who played foursomes with Rose in an England international against Spain earlier this year.

Teams, Digest, page 24

Kelleher guides Irish into play-offs

Hockey

BILL COLWILL
reports from Harare

Sara Kelleher guided Ireland to an unexpected 3-2 win against Japan in the World Cup qualifying tournament here yesterday, with the victory earning her team a place in tomorrow's fifth-to-eighth play-offs.

Ireland, who had just one point from their labours here before yesterday's encounter, had to win against the Japanese to keep alive any hopes of making next year's finals in the Netherlands. They started bad, letting in two goals in the opening 14 minutes and looking ragged.

Towards the end of the first half they won a string of penalty corners but were unable to breach the Japanese defences, with Japan's goalkeeper Nima Miyazaki quite outstanding in covering her line.

Kelleher, who had turned in moderate efforts at the tourna-

ment until this game, led Ireland's recovery eight minutes into the second half with a strong run down the right. The Slough midfielder found Lynsey McVicker inside to strike the first blow into the back of the net.

Spurred on by a large band of supporters, the Irish again drove forward, though their endeavours received a setback with the temporary suspension of Mary Logue. Reduced to 10 players, they forced a penalty corner in the 43rd minute and Arlene Thompson scored the equaliser.

At a penalty corner with just seven minutes remaining, the ball was switched by Thompson to Kelleher, who drove in the winning goal. There was still time for Japan's captain Sahori Miyazaki to hit the crossbar at the other end, but the Irish survived. Their coach Terry Gregg was ecstatic. "You can't believe what this result means to me," he said.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Stages: Pool A: Ireland 3, Japan 2, Pool B: Spain 3, Japan 2, Pool C: Zimbabwe 0, Pool D: Scotland 6, Spain 4, Pool E: Scotland 5, Ireland 4, Pool F: Spain 5, Ireland 4, Pool G: Zimbabwe 0, Pool H: Spain 4, Zimbabwe 0.

Darragh's clear win

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY
reports from Dublin

Paul Darragh jumped two clear rounds on the mare Scandal to lead Ireland to success in the Nations Cup at the Kerrycgold Dublin Horse Show yesterday while Britain, the joint leaders after the first round, trailed into fifth place.

Ireland, who received the Aga Khan Trophy from their president, Mary Robinson, claimed the victory without Eddie Macken having to jump a single fence. Like Ireland, Britain had three clear circuits in the first round, from Nick Skelton on Virtual Village Showjumper, Geoff Billington on It's Otto and Robert Smith on Senator. Tess Hanauer, with John Whitaker thus not required to jump Grannicus in the first round.

The Netherlands moved up from fifth to be runners-up after three faultless second rounds. Eric van der Vleuten was the only Dutchman to emulate Darragh's performance of two clear circuits.

Van der Vleuten's team-mates Jan Tops, on Operette la Silla, and Piet Raymakers, the leading horse in the 1992 Olympics, Jewel's Classic Touch, were faultless at their second attempts.

Results, Digest, page 27



Young swinger: Justin Rose practises on the sixth hole at Quaker Ridge Golf Club yesterday

Photograph: Allsport

Swede misses out on record

Patrik Sjoland narrowly missed birdie putts on the last two holes to lose a chance of becoming the first European Tour player to break 60 in a full event, in the second round of the Czech Open near Prague yesterday.

The Swede's 10-under-par 61 sliced three strokes off the Karlstein course record and earned him a share of the lead with Spain's Ryder Cup prospect, Ignacio Garrido, and another Spaniard, Miguel Jimenez.

Early evening thunderstorms halted proceedings with 36 players left to complete their second rounds this morning. The first-round leader, Britain's Scott Henderson, was nine under par, two shots off the lead, with three holes left when play stopped.

Sjoland was a stroke off the European Tour record for 18 holes as he joined Garrido and Jimenez on 11-under-par 131, two strokes ahead of the field. The Swede also equalled the best score of the year, by Britain's Jamie Spence at the Cannes Open, as he picked up 10 birdies by the time he came to the eighth, his 17th hole.

Needing two more birdies for the first 59, a putt of 18 feet spun out of the cup on the eighth and he just missed the hole at the ninth, his last, from 15 feet.

Sjoland had switched to an old putter and needed only 25 putts in his round. "I started thinking about the record after I birdied the fourth, my 13th hole," said Sjoland, who led last year's Italian Open with five holes left but finished second. "But when I lipped out on the eighth I knew it wasn't to be."

Garrido continued his challenge for a Ryder Cup place with a 65, while Jimenez posted 64. Another Swede, Daniel Chopra, is in the clubhouse on 133 after a 63.

Garrido, 10th in the Cup table in his race for a place on Seve Ballesteros's team against the United States next month, can clinch his Cup place three weeks before the qualifying deadline, but Italy's Costantino Rocca, ninth, is almost certain to miss the cut here by a stroke. He could also be passed by in the table by Ireland's Padraig Harrington, who is six off the lead after a 68.



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Overmars to provide cutting edge

THE WELL-KNOWN IMPORT

Glenn Moore
talks to the Dutch speedster who prefers to live life in the slow lane

From Iceland's Bjarni Gudjonsson to Macedonia's Georgi Hristov, the foreign players have flown in this summer leaving fans scratching their heads and wondering whether their manager has bought a carhorse or a diamond. Arsenal, it appears, may have bought both in one deal.

Their main signing, the most enticing of the summer, is Marc Overmars, a £6m recruit from Ajax. His pedigree is impressive – he is a European Cup winner and World Cup quarter-finalist – and his past unconvincing.

Overmars, who makes his Arsenal debut at Leeds United today, grew up on a family farm. It was a smallholding which had made little investment in mechanisation. Thus, come time for the potato harvest, Overmars would yoke himself with a rope and haul along a cart while, behind him, other family members pulled out the crop. This, he thinks, may have contributed to his renowned pace.

As muscle-building tales go, it is up there with the claim that Dickie Bird prepared for a season'sumping by standing for hours with bags of sugar attached to his legs and that Anthony Nesty, Surinam's first Olympic swimming champion, gained his speed in shark-infested waters. This one, however, appears to be at least partially true.

"I grew up on a farm," said Overmars when we met this week. "I used to help my grandfather who had no machines, no tractors. Each year when we harvested potatoes we had to do it with a rope along the front and few men standing on a platform. We would pull them along while they pulled up potatoes. They told me: 'This is good for you Marc'. Every year they would phone me and say: 'It is harvest time'." His grandfather, incidentally, still lives on the farm. He is, said Overmars with noticeable pride, 94 years old.

Overmars also attributes his pace to his mother – "she was quick but, being a farmer, had no time for sports" – and some weight-training he did as a small, slightly built teenager.

In those days, he was a junior with



Marc Overmars will probably play in three positions this season – left and right wing and, if necessary, just behind the striker or strikers

Photograph: Colorsport

Go Ahead Eagles. Unlike most Ajax graduates, he did not come through the celebrated system but joined, at 19, from Willem II. No sooner did he arrive than the team took off, winning everything available.

"We were only 22, 23 and we were so confident, every game we would go on the pitch whistling, expecting to win 3-1 or 4-1. And we were so popular, everywhere we went. It was unbelievable." His eyes are full of the happy memories but then his voice drops as he adds "but it is not possible to keep a team at that kind of level."

Overmars will start the season on the left flank for Arsenal, who have reverted to a 4-4-2 system. "I do more running but I expect that," he said. "I used to be a midfielder at 15, 16

went. Eventually Overmars joined the exodus consummating a move to Arsenal which had been long foreseen.

"I spoke to Dennis Bergkamp many times, though his being here was not the reason I came. He said he was much more settled than in Italy and felt good. I think this is a country where I can be successful and enjoy the football. When I see the Italian game it is like chess. It does not like playing against them as there is so much emphasis on defence."

Overmars will start the season on the left flank for Arsenal, who have reverted to a 4-4-2 system. "I do more running but I expect that," he said. "I used to be a midfielder at 15, 16

so I am used to it. I have been told I have three positions, left and right wing or, when Ian [Wright] or Dennis are suspended or injured, I could play in the middle behind the centre-forward." Although two-footed, he expresses a slight preference for the left whence he bewildered Norwich in Arsenal's 6-2 win on Monday night.

He has already noticed a few differences. "The speed of the game is much quicker. Even in training it is very fast. At Ajax we have a few minutes passing, then attack, we wait for the moment. Here it is so quick mistakes are made. There is also more space, with Ajax we were always pushing to get through as

other teams defended with 10 against us."

He also believes the refereeing is lenient, though his team-mates, after 83 Premiership bookings and six dismissals last year, may not agree. Overmars, who has had one yellow card in his career, said: "When they kick me around my personality is not such that I get angry. I stand up and walk away. I am not a diver either, I prefer to try and score."

"While it was not nice, I learned from the experience. Not playing for six to eight months makes you much hungrier when you start again. You need the bad times to appreciate the good. With Ajax we won so many titles we did not enjoy it properly. We won the European Cup and a day later we were training as normal and

ponent of his game and there were naturally fears that he would lose it when he suffered a serious knee injury early last year.

"I have done tests since and I am just as fast as before. Personally, I was never afraid I would not recover, it was simply a matter of time. I tried to get back for Euro '96 but it was impossible."

"While it was not nice, I learned from the experience. Not playing for six to eight months makes you much hungrier when you start again. You need the bad times to appreciate the good. With Ajax we won so many titles we did not enjoy it properly. We won the European Cup and a day later we were training as normal and

'I want to win prizes. I am used to doing that every year. I am 24 and young and hungry'

we thought: 'We should enjoy this.' That was not always easy under Louis van Gaal, the then Ajax coach who has joined Barcelona. "He does have a temper," confirmed Overmars. "There were many times we were meeting after the game on a Monday when he got so angry his face went red. But he is so good as a coach. From player No 1 to No 20 he gives everyone the same time, the same feeling that he is important. The quality of him was that he could see what you were doing wrong and get you training on it."

"He was my trainer for five years. He bought me and improved me a lot. He demands a lot but you have to admire his energy. Every day he starts. He never missed anything in training."

"But there were times when there were too many orders. After a while you wanted to do some things by instinct not the system."

"And so to a Highbury great with expectation. "I don't feel under pressure because I expect things from myself also. When I was 18, Willem bought me for a lot of money, it was not a problem for me. Nor when Ajax bought me."

"I want to win prizes. I am used to doing that every year. I am 24 and young and hungry. For me there are two important prizes, the League and the Cup. There is also the Coca-Cola and, yes, Europe, but it is not the Champions' League."

"That last line gives away the standards this small, neat and composed man is used to. Looking through his words he appears arrogant, but that has not come across in person as we have sat in the Hertfordshire hotel where he temporarily lodges. The afternoon is to be spent house-hunting in the local villages. Rumours that he is a playboy appear unfounded as he says: "I come from a small village and prefer to live in the country. I like to see the sights but London is so big, even Amsterdam is big for me."

"He leaves with the complaint "the houses are so expensive round here". It is an odd comment for a highly paid star, but not for a farmer's son brought up to seek value for money and also to provide it. Arsenal may have found a diamond."

Bringing colour to the Black Country

THE UNKNOWN IMPORT

Phil Shaw meets Jan Sorensen, the Dane who wants to make Walsall great

few years I was European marketing manager for a tenpin bowling company."

How did he make the leap from that to preparing to kick off at the FA Cup semi-finals, Chesterfield, today? "The football kept coming back to me. I watched dozens of matches last season at all levels. So when this job came up I wrote to the chairman [Jeff Bonser]. I asked what he had to say to speaking to me for an hour."

"He invited me for a chat and it went on for about five hours. They checked me out in a way that probably no other candidate was, but I was happy with that because it meant their decision was the right one. They seemed to like my ideas, plus the fact that I've got contacts on the Continent, which is important now."

"People say Walsall are taking a risk, but I say I was the safest bet. What makes more sense: to take on someone who's been sacked a few times,

or someone that's proved himself at everything he's done?"

Walsall's set-up was already surprisingly European. The general manager, Paul Taylor, takes care of the scouting system, transfer negotiations and players' contracts. Sorensen and Derek Mountfield, whom he re-signed as player-coach weeks after Nicholl released him, are to concentrate on the team.

Sorensen soon demonstrated a realistic streak in his revolutionary spirit, bringing the squad back in after lunch instead of letting them practise their putting or go shopping. "I've tried to get across to them that it's better to have a shirt month now and be able to cruise through the season than to be constantly trying to catch up on fitness levels."

Before beginning ball work in earnest, Sorensen put his players through two weeks of rigorous running. He is adamant that stamina and discipline are

prerequisites for playing the one-touch, attacking style in which.

"You can't expect Second Division players to perform like Premiership stars. But you can still aspire to do it and I have a feeling my players fancy going for it. The British have always been good at the physical side but less so the tactical and the technical, though it's definitely improved in the last few years."

Crewe, under Dario Gradi, won promotion from Walsall's level adhering to what Sorensen hails as pure football values. However, it was Bury, "a very powerful side", who took the title. Although that fact tempers his idealism, mention of top scorer Kyle Lightbourn's £500,000 switch to Coventry provokes an example of the positive thinking that led Walsall to choose him ahead of Willie Donachie, Gordon Cowans and Frank Stapleton.

"Crewe did brilliantly last season, but other sides were able to say: 'Stop him and we'll probably stop Walsall scoring.' That made us easier to defend against. I want us to score goals from all over the team. Sounds not unlike Total Foot-

ball, as exemplified by Cruyff and Co. "You could say that," Sorensen says. "Put it this way, I won't complain if my right-back scores 15 this season."

In reality, he will be looking more to a French striker – Basile Bol's brother, Roger – whose capture this week has fuelled his natural optimism. "I haven't promised my chairman we'll go up this season. Our budget isn't the biggest, to say the least, but I do intend to do it within my two-year contract."

"Why not? There's 300,000 people in Walsall, so we'd pack the place out if Wolves, West Brom and Stoke were coming here in the First Division. And I don't plan to leave after that because the club would give me such a damn good contract that I'd have to stay!"

The hype and hopes of August often turn to sawdust by September, but Sorensen is sure he will not buckle under the legendary pressure of his new profession. "I thrive on stress," he asserts. "It can be a positive thing, to get the adrenalin going. It was fun doing a million-pound deal in the commercial world, but I'd sooner win 3-0."

He adds: "People say Walsall are taking a risk, but I say I was the safest bet."



Jan Sorensen: 'People say Walsall are taking a risk, but I say I was the safest bet'

Photograph: Peter Jay

As the remarkable becomes ever more routine in English football, it seems unexceptional for a derailed Dutchman and a bespectacled Frenchman to be managing major clubs in the cosmopolitan capital. The advent of a chunky, chain-smoking Scandinavian at Walsall may take more getting used to.

If Jan Sorensen, who is into his second month at Bescot Stadium, was not quite a Rund Gullit as a player, he certainly boasts a more impressive CV than Arsène Wenger. A playmaker in the mould of his fellow Dane Jan Molby, Sorensen was in the Club Bruges side which lost to Liverpool in the 1978 European Cup final.

Six years later, following Graeme Souness' departure to Sampdoria, Sorensen was close to taking his place at Anfield. There were also spells with Ajax (under Johan Cruyff) and Feyenoord, as well as numerous caps for the emerging Denmark side in the company of Allan Simonsen, Soren Lerby and Jesper Olsen.

Spectatism was nevertheless rife when Walsall, a middling Second Division outfit, unveiled

Chris Nicholl's successor. It was not just that they had entrusted their fortunes to a foreigner with no grounding in the domestic game or in management. The word was that he was a timeshare salesman from Tamworth.

Sorensen, now 42, separates fact and fiction with a heavy laugh and in a near-perfect English. He was indeed out of the game for eight years. "Then again Kevin Keegan had seven years away before going to Newcastle and I'm a bigger name than him in Europe," he says, tongue not obviously in cheek.

There is no attempt, either, to deny that he has been dominated in the aforementioned town for five years, having married a Midlands girl he met while living in Portugal. That, he believes, was Walsall's good fortune rather than something to apologise for.

"He invited me for a chat and it went on for about five hours. They checked me out in a way that probably no other candidate was, but I was happy with that because it meant their decision was the right one. They seemed to like my ideas, plus the fact that I've got contacts on the Continent, which is important now."

"People say Walsall are taking a risk, but I say I was the safest bet. What makes more sense: to take on someone who's been sacked a few times,

or someone that's proved himself at everything he's done?"

Walsall's set-up was already surprisingly European. The general manager, Paul Taylor, takes care of the scouting system, transfer negotiations and players' contracts. Sorensen and Derek Mountfield, whom he re-signed as player-coach weeks after Nicholl released him, are to concentrate on the team.

Sorensen soon demonstrated a realistic streak in his revolutionary spirit, bringing the squad back in after lunch instead of letting them practise their putting or go shopping. "I've tried to get across to them that it's better to have a shirt month now and be able to cruise through the season than to be constantly trying to catch up on fitness levels."

Before beginning ball work in earnest, Sorensen put his players through two weeks of rigorous running. He is adamant that stamina and discipline are

prerequisites for playing the one-touch, attacking style in which.

"You can't expect Second Division players to perform like Premiership stars. But you can still aspire to do it and I have a feeling my players fancy going for it. The British have always been good at the physical side but less so the tactical and the technical, though it's definitely improved in the last few years."

Crewe, under Dario Gradi, won promotion from Walsall's level adhering to what Sorensen hails as pure football values. However, it was Bury, "a very powerful side", who took the title. Although that fact tempers his idealism, mention of top scorer Kyle Lightbourn's £500,000 switch to Coventry provokes an example of the positive thinking that led Walsall to choose him ahead of Willie Donachie, Gordon Cowans and Frank Stapleton.

"Crewe did brilliantly last season, but other sides were able to say: 'Stop him and we'll probably stop Walsall scoring.' That made us easier to defend against. I want us to score goals from all over the team. Sounds not unlike Total Foot-

ball, as exemplified by Cruyff and Co. "You could say that," Sorensen says. "Put it this way, I won't complain if my right-back scores 15 this season."

In reality, he will be looking more to a French striker – Basile Bol's brother, Roger – whose capture this week has fuelled his natural optimism. "I haven't promised my chairman we'll go up this season. Our budget isn't the biggest, to say the least, but I do intend to do it within my two-year contract."

"Why not? There's 300,000 people in Walsall, so we'd pack the place out if Wolves, West Brom and Stoke were coming here in the First Division. And I don't plan to leave after that because the club would give me such a damn good contract that I'd have to stay!"

The sale of David Platt will be few Arsenal fans' first question. On the contrary, many will sigh with relief. Platt came as England captain, but has underachieved. Merson still has a few good years in him?

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FOOTBALL KICKS-OFF

sport

'Preparing for a season of boom or bust'

Glenn Moore
looks ahead to
the ups and
downs of the
forthcoming 50
weeks of action

For a few days this summer the plans of Premiership managers were thrown into disarray. They waited, mobile phones in hand, until the British Airways strike was lifted and they could go shopping again.

The immediate results of their £60m summer spree on overseas players will be visible this afternoon as new recruits from Portugal to Georgia, but mostly from Scandinavia, open the new season.

They will run out in freshly painted stadiums, to the cheers of newly replica-kitted supporters, and all will seem right on planet football.

Down in the basement, however, at places like Scarborough and Exeter, anxious chairmen will be counting the takings and wondering whether a clutch of free transfers from their rivals' reserves will somehow create enough interest to turn a profit come May.

The game is in the midst of a boom, but it is also on the brink of bankruptcy. As this week's Deloitte & Touche report underlined, the game's wealth is increasingly being concentrated within the Premiership.

The combined turnover of Manchester United and Newcastle United, for example, exceeds that of all 48 clubs in the lower two divisions.

The boom is largely down to Sky Television who, this year, will pay Premiership clubs £17.5m for the right to show their matches. This is 60 times higher than a decade ago. Undoubtedly this wealth has primarily been a force for good. The new and revamped grounds, the Bergamps and Zolas, the increase in spectators of both sexes, all stem from this input.



Ready for action: A groundsman at Cambridge United prepares the Abbey stadium pitch for the start of the season

Photograph: Brian Harris

But opportunities are being missed – in the last 12 months £120m has been lost to the English game in transfer fees paid overseas. Vast amounts have also been spent on players' wages and agents' commissions. Used more wisely, this money could have been used to improve facilities and youth development throughout the game.

The Premiership chairmen have agreed to pay £5m a year to the Football Trust and the same to the Nationwide League for youth development, but this largesse is still only six per cent of their Sky income. There may be further grants as, despite six months' debate, they are still arguing about dividing the spoils.

This may be an subject for the government's football task force to address, although one suspects this well-intended but ill-considered initiative will soon founder through lack of teeth and poor leadership. It is hard to see how David Mellor can force clubs to reduce admission prices while there are people like himself prepared to pay them, or what he has in common with those fans still pining for the terraces.

While the conclusion of the Winchester court case has removed one festering sore, we still await the bung inquiry's report more than a year after being assured by Rick Parry, then the Premier League's chief executive, that it would be out within a fortnight. Apparently it has been with the lawyers for months.

On a more positive note, November sees the Football Association Council consider Howard Wilkinson's Charter for Quality, which seeks to redress 30 years' misjudgment in the coaching of young players.

By then, England may have qualified for the World Cup – if so, one hopes the council do not use it as an excuse to resist.

As the season goes on, the World Cup will increasingly dominate thoughts. The globalisation of the English game (the Premiership has 133 foreign players representing 37

countries) means the tournament is likely to be followed more closely than ever.

England, if they qualify, have an outside chance of making the final but, given the proximity of France, there will be almost as much resting on the performance of the fans as the players.

Before then, we have a domestic campaign to savour with a quintet of high-spending clubs threatening Manchester United's hegemony at home, while there is also room for optimism abroad.

While changes in the structure will make it harder for British clubs to progress in the Champions' League, Liverpool,

Chelsea and Arsenal look strong enough to ensure English interest in Europe well into the new year.

The fortunes of the latter two will be followed by Channel Five, who have become the latest company to pin their fortunes on football. Advertising executives seem as besotted as those in television and it is hard to recall the days when football was so unloved it was restricted to two television highlights programmes, a couple of boys' magazines and a page or two in the newspaper.

Next on the television agenda is pay-per-view, with Sky for British clubs to progress in the Champions' League, Liverpool, years of the next century, digital television could be established with every game available – at a price – and Premiership clubs rich beyond even current dreams.

Even then, however, money will not guarantee success. That is why Middlesbrough and Manchester City are in the Nationwide League and Barnsley and Wimbledon in the Carling Premiership.

This unpredictability is at the heart of football's success and, while it is hard to see Barnsley finishing above Manchester United, with so many largely unknown foreigners involved this season could see more surprises than ever.

Three players to watch this season....

Jason Euell Wimbledon



Age: 20.
Prem apps: 16.
Injuries, and the
Marcus Gayle
Efan Enoh part-
nership restricted
appearances last
year but although
competition for
places remains in-
tense, the South
Londoner could make the breakthrough.
Reminiscent of a young Ian Wright.

How Glenn Moore's 1996-97 players to watch fare...

Emile Heskey – Continued progress highlighted by last-minute Coca-Cola Cup final equaliser.
David Beckham – Young player of the year, a fixture for England. Hard to believe his club place was in doubt last August.
Andy Gray – Disappeared amid injury and management upheaval at Leeds.

Jody Morris Chelsea



Age: 18.
Prem apps: 13.
The outstanding
player in a crop
of promising
youngsters at
Stamford Bridge.
He may be small
of stature but
has poise and
confidence to
play alongside the Zolas and Di Matteos.

David Watson Barnsley



Age: 23.
Prem apps: 0.
Make or break for
former England
youth and Under-
21 goalkeeper. Will
have plenty to do as
his home-town
seek to establish
themselves in the
Premiership. One
concern is his height, at 5ft 11in he is
short for a modern goalkeeper.

David Ginola Tottenham



Was losing his
way at Newcastle
ever before Kevin
Keegan went. White Hart
Lane's traditions
will be to his
liking but not Gery
Francis' emphasis on
work-rate. Has a World Cup place
aim for but little chance of getting it.

... and the verdict on last season's players with something to prove

Juminho – Outstanding in a losing cause. Proved ability to everyone.
Andy Cole – Goals remained scarce after pneumonia and Neil Ruddock cut season in half. Remains on trial.
David Platt – Discarded by England, continued injury problems. A move to Middlesbrough seems imminent.

Stan Collymore Aston Villa



No excuses now
for missing training,
nor for wasting
his talent. Villa, the club he
watched as a boy, may prove
the ideal stage for this complicated
man, and Brian Little the perfect mix of tutor
and nursemaid.

Gianluca Vialli Chelsea



Given up smoking
in an attempt to
regain his place after
the summer shock
of finding no one
wanted to buy him.
Looking sharp but now
has Tore Andre
Flo to contend with as well as
Gianfranco Zola and Mark Hughes.

Davenport back in search of century

would not swap my squad for
any other."

Manchester City's £3.5m striker, Lee Bradbury, will partner Uwe Rosler in attack against his former club, Portsmouth, at Maine Road. Another former Portsmouth player, Kit Symons, has shaken off a flu virus and Rosler has recovered from a slight hamstring strain. But Mark Margeson retains his place in goal as Tommy Wright, the Northern Ireland international, has a leg injury.

John Aloisi, an Australian international forward signed from Cremonese for £300,000 this week, is in line to make his Portsmouth debut. His fellow Australian, Hamilton Thorp, could also play his first match, but Russell Petrelli is ruled out of the game with a knee injury.

Steve Stone looks likely to start his comeback from serious injury in Nottingham Forest's match against Port Vale. Last time they played at Vale Park – exactly 40 years ago – they won 7-1.

Wolves give a debut to their 17-year-old Irish forward, Robbie Keane, against Norwich City at Carrow Road.

Celtic must beware the other Rangers

Scottish League

er, who arrived as part of the exchange deal which took Paolo Di Canio to Sheffield Wednesday in midweek, is expected to make his debut.

Berwick's manager, Jimmy Thomson, hoped the former Celtic goalkeeper, Pat Bonner, would join his side, but the former Republic of Ireland international rejected the move.

Thomson said: "I'm confident the players I have will be professional and not let everyone down. I'm not going to stand here and say we will beat Celtic, but the players will do themselves proud."

Dumbarton's manager, Ian Wallace, hopes for the same level of commitment as his side meet its former club, Aberdeen, at Boghead.

"First things first," Jansen said. "We have a job to do against Berwick before we can think of Europe. I'm confident we will have the right attitude. We only have to carry on from how we played on Wednesday in the 1-0 friendly win against Roma. The Berwick game is another good opportunity to show what we can do – it is an important match for us."

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